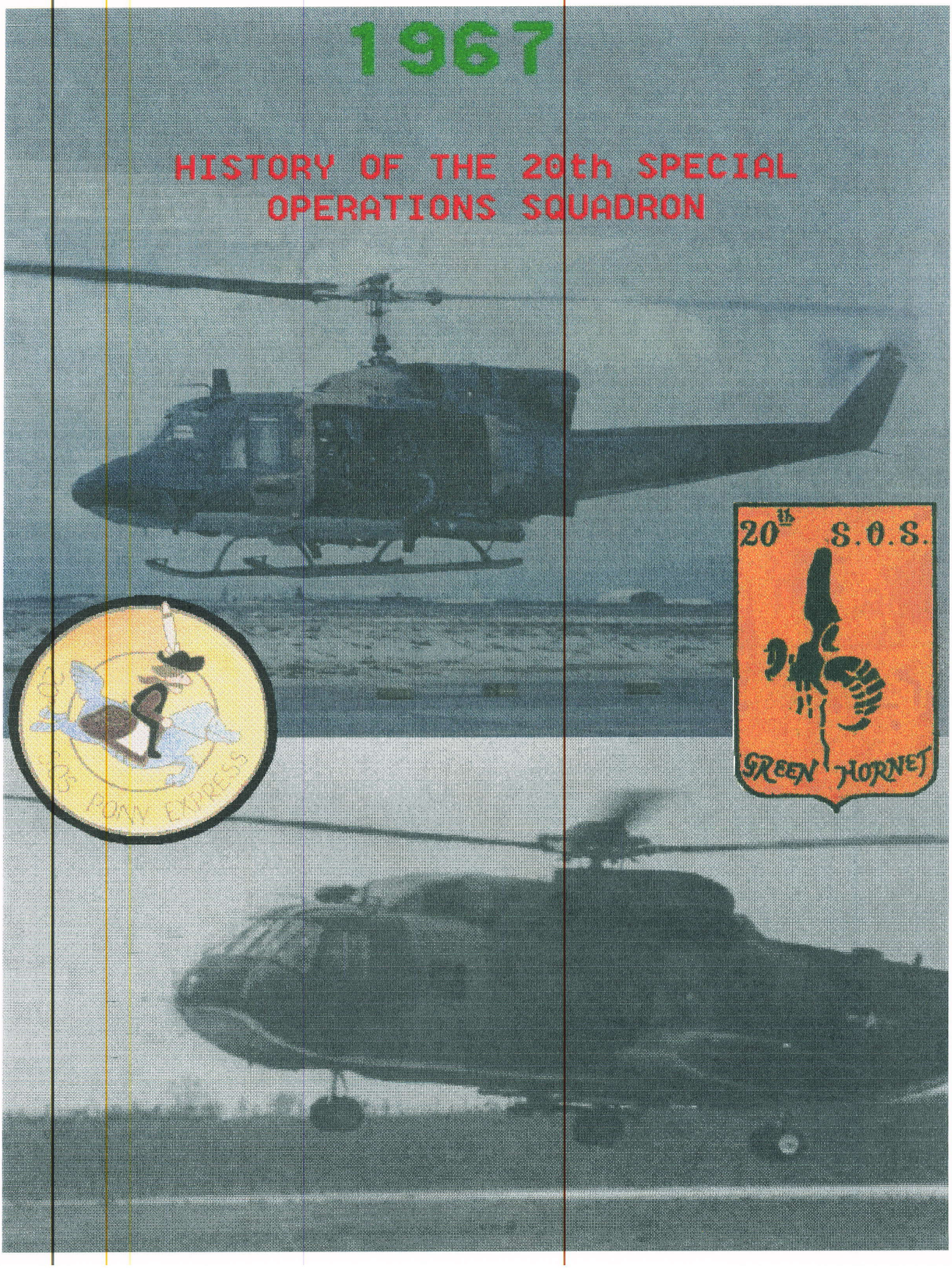
1967

HISTORY OF THE 20th SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON



1967

History of the 20 Helicopter Squadron

Numbered Air Force: 7th

Location: Nha Trang AB, RVN

Wing: 14th Air Commando Wing

Type Aircraft: H-3/ H-1

Hours : 11,837 # Sorties: 15483

Passengers: 32,731 Cargo: 3,890,883 lbs. Expended 7.62: 240,400 rds 2.75 FFAR: 303

Commander: Lt. Col. John W. Amidon/ Lt. Col. John M. Steen

Senior Enlisted: UNK

Personnel Strength (Min/Max): UNK Officers UNK Enlisted

Commentary: The 20th Helicopter Squadron continued to operate from Nha Trang during 1967 with FOLs at Kontum, Tan Son Nhut, and Udorn. There were other temporary facilities that were utilized for only short periods and were too numerous to list on this sheet. The mission statement remained: " Support various Air Force combat activities, such as the communications sites, Tactical Air Control System, air liaison officers, airfield construction, aeromedical evacuations, counter-insurgency operations, and to support/ augment search and rescue forces in SEA if required. The unit will also be responsive to priority requirements of MACV." The operations and activities of the squadron were stopped numerous times due to roles and missions agreements that the Air Force Chief of Staff was working on. The problem was that the 20th was the only armed Air Force helicopter squadron in history. On 19 February 4 UH-1F's completed our first armed mission for MACSOG. The UH-1's had to be modified with FM radios, armored seats, and self-sealing fuel tanks to be useful in the missions that were given the squadron and shortages of parts and other materials resulted in low capabilities rates during early 1967.

Significant Missions: The 20th participated in operation *Trojan Horse* throughout most of 1967 and details are sketchy as to the actual mission. In early 1967 we supported operation *Deuces Wild* that pitted the 20th in it's first aggressor role against F-102's to train them to halt insurgencies into U.S. controlled airspace. April brought more team infils near the Ho Chi Minh trail this time with strike teams versus recon teams. 1967 also saw the 20th training battlefield co-ordination to Thai Army and Air Force units allowing them more cohesive operations. The "*Pony Express*" in the role of SAR assets were the first on scene when two B-52's collided in the air and were able to pick up six survivors.

Significant Awards: Air Medals: 145 Silver Star: 1 Distinguished Flying Cross: 22

MEMORANDUM

Date: 27 Dec 94

From: 20 SOS/CCX

To: WHOM IT MAY CONCERN

Subject: DOCUMENT CLASSIFICATION

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1. The documents contained herein are portions of the 1ST/16TH SOW histories for the dates shown on each document. The SOW histories as a whole are classified for the most part.

2. The documents in this binder are a compilation of materials from varied sources and have all been declassified if necessary. Sheets showing declassification are all posted in the last document protector for each respective binder.

3. Any materials you feel may be of questionable classification you are encouraged to bring to my attention and I will endeavor to alleviate your apprehensions.

SQUADRON HISTORIAN

DECLASSIFIED

[redacted]

2. (U) The enemy activity [redacted] has increased considerably in the past month. Heavy anti-aircraft artillery and numerous automatic weapons are becoming more prevalent near our bombing spots. It is becoming increasingly hazardous for the unarmed version. Ground fire reports from our pilots are becoming commonplace. We have yet to lose an aircraft to the enemy but it is feared that our luck may run out.

3. (U) The Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Service (ARRS) again called upon the 20th to back up their Jolly Green Giant Detachment at Udorn. The 20th flew 21 hours, 40 minutes in support of this Search and Rescue (SAR) effort.

4. (U) During January the 20th gave support to the Thai Government in Bangkok by transporting several geological survey teams into various locations in Southwest Thailand. The Thais are trying to obtain a more detailed estimate of their mineral resources and would like to have the 20th support this mission for a full year. However, other commitments of the 20th may well prevent this. A total of 14,595 pounds of equipment and 216 technicians were carried in 35 hours, 50 minutes flying time.

5. (U) In an effort to stop enemy [illegible] from flying across the Mekong River and supplying wounded terrorists in Northeast Thailand, Seventh and Thirteenth Air Force jointly had an operations plan, Duece Wild, involving the C-47 to fly as targets for the A-1Es stationed at Udorn. This system would provide the pilots with experience on slow-moving targets for the A-1Es and [illegible] the effectiveness of such a method. The practice intercepts were flown both during the day and night. The results to date have been very good. The squadron flew 13 hours, 10 minutes in support of this operation during January.

6. (U) The United States Overseas Mission (USOM) continued its radio installation program in Northeast Thailand. The 20th flew 37 hours, 15 minutes carrying 27,350 pounds of cargo and 653 passengers in support of this mission.

[redacted]

DECLASSIFIED

[redacted]

7. (S) On 24 January the 20th flew another assault mission against the communist terrorists. Four CH-3Cs airlifted 221 Thai troops into the area where they immediately surrounded the enemy. Over one hundred communists were either killed or captured during this operation.

8. (S) Squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours Flown	497:45
Sorties Flown	569
Passengers Carried	1908
Cargo Carried	112,550

Eight aircraft assigned / Eight operational
(682 Still at Bangkok for repair, 689 assigned to the Repair and Modification (R&M) Team for repair.)

Incommission Rate	68%
Aircraft Utilization Rate	62:12 Hours/Aircraft

9. (C) Supply problems are still our biggest obstacle to a higher incommission rate. The competence and moral of the maintenance section have improved 100%. The squadron at Udorn flew the most it has ever flown in any other previous month.

[redacted]

67-398

[redacted]

HISTORICAL REPORT - TAN SON NHUT
January - 1967

1. The history of the 20th Helicopter Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base RVN during the period of 1 January 67 through 31 January 67 is as follows:

a. The number of CH-3C aircraft assigned during this period was four. Helicopter #579 is still out of commission due to damage incurred during the April and December mortar attacks and there is no ETIC.

b. Sixteen pilots were utilized during operations in this period. Twelve pilots were assigned here as their primary base; the other four pilots were here only temporarily.

c. A total of 207:30 combat flying hours were compiled on 478 sorties; 452,404 pounds of cargo and 1195 passengers were airlifted during this period. These figgures can be further broken down as follows:

(1) Combat hours flown in primary support of: Air Force - 135:00; Navy - 25:00 Army 50:00.

(2) Sorties flown in support of: Air Force 338; Navy 41; Army 98 and other 7.

(3) Pounds of cargo flown for: Air Force 303,820; Navy 52,557; Army 69,077; Other 0.

(4) Passengers airlifted for: Air Force 904; Navy 56; Army 200; and other 135.

d. The largest proportion of our total flying effort for the month was Forward Air Controller Support. It consisted of 200,811 pounds of munitions airlifted on 87 sorties. The second largest expenditure of effort was the airlifting of food. 78,532 pounds of food were moved on 26 sorties.

e. The courier was flown on 30 of the 31 days this month, no aircraft was available for the one day. The following passengers were carried: 403 Air Force; 67 Army; and 25 Other. A total of 14,700 pounds of baggage was also carried.

f. The Trojan Horse was flown fifteen times, a total of 27 passengers and 5,600 pounds of cargo were flown.

g. During this period the following VIP's were airlifted:

(1) On 9 Jan Lt Gen Momyer was flown from Tan Son Nhut to Lai Khe and returned.

[redacted]

[redacted]

(2) On 11 Jan Secretary of the Air Force, Harold Brown, Gen Fergerson, Lt Gen's Momyer and Wheless and party were flown to Field Force V and returned to Tan Son Nhut.

(3) On 15 Jan Brig Gen Everest was flown from Tan Son Nhut to Bien Hoa.

(4) On 17 Jan Brig Gen's Thompson and Smith were flown from Tan Son Nhut to Bien Hoa and returned.

(5) On 25 Jan Brig Gen's Talbott and Dunhorn and party were flown to Kangaroo Helipad near Vung Tau and returned.

h. On the evening of 9 Jan 67, the flight was called upon by the Navy, who had a "Seal" team in trouble. The team was on a classified recon mission in the Saigon Delta region when they were discovered. We launched two aircraft just before sunset on 15 minutes notice. Our briefing of the situation consisted of little more than the location, number of men to be picked up and that we would have two Navy Huey gunships for cover. The low plane piloted by Capt William Johnson went in to make the extraction. The hoist failed immediately and Capt Johnson was forced to use a "McGuire" rig that the Navy men had thrown aboard the plane to be used if this did happen. Three men attached themselves by use of the ropes of the McGuire rig and thus hung about 60 feet below the aircraft. They were carried this way for about 6 miles until Capt Johnson could find a safe area to land and take them aboard. Capt Johnson then returned to fly high cover for the second aircraft piloted by Maj Clifton Ward. Maj Ward, after some difficulty locating the remaining men, made the extraction with less than 5 minutes of daylight left. The team was in an area of very thick cover consisting of small trees and lush elephant grass to a height of 20 feet. Visibility into the cover was limited to the rotor wash area and areas opened by bomb craters. The aircraft came under isolated small arms fire when moving into the area but did not draw any ground fire while making the actual pick up. The members of both crews involved in the rescue were submitted for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

i. On 25 January 67, Capt Aldon Woodward after completing a normal resupply to Song Be was called upon to assist in a crash recovery. The rescue was from a very insecure area along the Cambodian border of the Central Highlands. The area was covered with very dense secondary jungle growth growing to a height of 75 feet. Four men were picked up and returned to Song Be special forces camp. Capt Woodward and crew were nominated for the Air Medal.

j. The flight was called upon to help in the construction and maintenance of two radar stations. More than 50,000lbs of equipment and building materials were moved to a site atop Hon Tre Island, which is located approximately 3 miles off-shore from Nha Trang AFB. The other radar station is located atop Con Son Island, which is located 45 miles off-shore from South-eastern coast of RVN. This is a Navy station and 52,000 lbs of equipment and supplies were airlifted in support of this unit.

[redacted]

[redacted]

1. (U) The 20th Helicopter Squadron was [illegible] the first of February. This detachment is presently located at Nha Trang Air Base, RVN, and is now in the organizing stage. The helicopters are currently being equipped with the mini-gun and rocket.

2. (U) The squadron at Nha Trang is scheduled to leave the Republic of Viet Nam during the first week of February. Three helicopters were ferried to Nha Trang Air Base in compliance with the directive that all our helicopters leave Thailand. However, the three helicopters soon returned and the squadron continued its location at Udorn. In connection with this proposed move it is rumored that the squadron will change or already has changed its name to the 20th Air Commando Squadron. However, no orders effecting this change have been forwarded to our headquarters. There seems to be some question as to what the unit's duty title possibly is.

3. (U) Lieutenant Colonel Johnny T. Williams returned back to the States and Lieutenant Colonel John [illegible] assumed command of the growing 20th Helicopter Squadron, which now has a total of 24 helicopters.

[redacted]

5. (U) The squadron continued to back up the Jolly Green Giants and flew 26 hours, 10 minutes in support of the Search and Rescue (SAR) effort. The squadron also maintained an average of 1.5 aircraft a day on a 15 minute alert status in order to replace the Jolly Greens, should they be scrambled from their forward staging bases. Approximately 420 hours of alert time was stood during February. On 24 February the 20th assisted [redacted] in its aircrew rescue. An F-105 pilot was picked up in North Viet Nam by a Jolly Green and a Pony. The CH-3C flew high cover for the HH-3E when it went in to make the pick up.

[redacted]

67-457

[redacted]

6. (S) The United States Overseas Mission continued its radio installation program in Northeast Thailand. The 20th flew 51 hours, 10 minutes carrying 25,615 pounds of cargo and 626 passengers in 125 sorties in support of this mission.

7. (U) On 4 February one CH-3C was scrambled to a small village to evacuate a little girl who had been struck by a large truck. The crew managed to pick up the victim in record time and rushed her to the hospital at Udorn. However, all these efforts proved in vain as the child died shortly after reaching the hospital.

8. (U) On 10 February the 20th carried Major General Porn, Chief of Staff of the First Royal Thai Army, to a small United States Army Special Forces Camp in Southern Thailand.

9. (S) On 13 February the 20th flew on a mercy mission to a village in Southern Laos. The Navy mistakenly bombed this friendly village and killed and injured several people. Two CH-3C's carried medical and Explosive Ordnance Disposal personnel into the village and then carried the more critically wounded to Savannkhet for air evacuation to the hospital at Korat Air Base, Thailand.

10. (S) Also on 13 February two CH-3C's flew General ~~Joseph~~ John P. McConnell, Chief of Staff of the United States Air Force, and his Air Staff from Da Nang Air Base to Monkey Mountain and then back to Da Nang.

11. (S) On 23 February two Ponies were sent on a mission deep into North Viet Nam to evacuate a friendly intelligence team that had been working in North Viet Nam for over four years. The weather greatly hindered the Ponies and when they reached the designated landing zone they discovered that the team was nowhere in sight. The Ponies searched the area despite low ceilings forcing them down within automatic weapons fire. It was during this search that one helicopter was riddled with 50 caliber automatic fire. The entire pilot's windshield was blown out and one blade was hit so badly that it was one foot out of track. The helicopter managed to make it back to the forward staging base, but only because of the professional skill of the crew. Both crews will be recommended for the Silver Star.

12. (C) Squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours Flown	433:20
Sorties Flown	461
Passengers Carried	1327
Cargo Carried	63,520

Eight aircraft assigned / Eight operational
(682 still at Bangkok for repair, 689 assigned to IM team for repair)

Incommission Rate	73%
Aircraft Utilization Rate	54:10 Hours/Aircraft

GP-4

[redacted]

67-457

[redacted]

February Historical Report
20th Helicopter Squadron
Tan Son Nhut

1. The history of the 20th Helicopter Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN during the period of 1 February 67 through 28 February 67 is as follows:

a. The number of CH-3C aircraft assigned during this period was three. Helicopter #579 was turned over to the MAM team and they are now accountable for it. On 8 February 67 two UH-1F's arrived from Nha Trang, one was assigned PCS and the other TDY. Later in the month a third UH-1F arrived from Nha Trang to be assigned for about a week.

b. The number of CH-3C pilots was increased to 13 in this period with the assignment of Maj Cates. Six UH-1F pilots were assigned here TDY for this period. All entries after this when refering to the different types aircraft will be as follows: CH-3C/UH-1F.

c. A total of 255:40 combat flying hours were compiled on 521 sorties; 242,494 pounds of cargo and 1400 passengers were airlifted during this period. These figures can be broken down into aircraft types as follows: 150:10/105:30 combat flying hours compiled on 294/217 sorties; 190,338/52,156 pounds of cargo and 871/419 passengers were airlifted during this period. These figures can again be broken down further as follows:

(1) Combat hours flown in primary support of: Air Force 74:40/81:35; Army: 128:40/13:50 and other 1:35/0.

(2) Sorties flown in support of: Air Force: 349; Army: 148; and other: 13.

(3) Pounds of cargo flown for: Air Force: 175,116; Army: 68,817; and other: 1350.

(4) Passengers airlifted for: Air Force: 799; Army: 218; and other: 383.

d. The largest proportion of CH-3C flying effort for the month was FAC support. It consisted of 111,277 pounds of munitions airlifted on 57 sorties and 52:35 combat hours flown. The second largest effort was the airlifting of food, mostly in support of the Army. A total of 60,342 pounds of food was moved on 25 sorties. The third major effort was in support of a classified mission working with the Army. This envolved flying 97 sorties and 51:45 combat hours.

e. The largest proportion of the total flying effort of the UH-1F's was FAC support and totaled 31:25 combat flying hours. The second greatest effort of the UH-1F's was VIP support, 15:10 combat flying hours.

[redacted]

f. The courier was flown on 14 of the 28 days this month, CH-3C's were not available on the other days. The following passengers were carried: Air Force: 239; Army: 22; and other: 14. A total of 8600 pounds of baggage was also carried.

g. The Trojan Horse was flown 12 times, a total of 26 passengers and 4850 pounds of cargo were flown.

h. During this reporting period the following VIP's were airlifted:

(1) On 3 Feb Premier Ky was flown in a CH-3C from TSN to Binh Minh and returned.

(2) On 11 Feb Brig Gen Spruance was flown in a CH-3C to Phu loi.

(3) On 11 Feb Brig Gen Huey was flown in a CH-3C from TSN to BNH and returned.

(4) On 11 Feb Maj Gen Crum was flown in a CH-3C to BNH and returned.

(5) On 13 Feb Brig Gen Moore and party were flown in a UH-1F from TSN to Chu Chi, Tay Minh Site #4, Tay Ninh and returned to TSN.

(6) On 15 Feb Brig Gen Moore and party were flown from Dian to 173 BDE Headquarters, to 3 miles north of Tay Ninh and returned to TSN.

(7) On 22 Feb Gen Momyer, Brig Gen Talbot and Brig Gen Moore were flown in a UH-1F to coordinates XT33-92, Northwest of Dau Ting to observe air strikes and paradrops in conjunction with the opening of operation Junction City.

i. From the 23 Feb through 26 Feb Brig Gen Moore used a UH-1F extensively to observe the air support used in conjunction with the Junction City operation. Brig Gen Moore utilized this aircraft a total of 25:25 combat flying hours.

j. On 9 Feb 2 UH-1F aircraft and 13 men to fly and maintain them were a assigned to this station. These aircraft were used primarily in VIP support and the airlifting of smaller cargo loads, where it was more economical to use a "Huey" versus a "Big Charley".

2. On 19 Feb the CH-3C's were assigned a new classified mission in support of Army Special Forces Teams. This has resulted in the deployment of the "Charlies" to Kontum FOB #2; the aircraft have remained at that base full time and returned to TSN only for maintenance. A total of 91 sorties and 51:45 combat flying hours have been flown in support of this mission.

[redacted]

HISTORIC I. [redacted]-UDORN
March 1967

1. (U) At Udorn there has been no appreciable change in the type of missions. However, there has been considerable increase in the number of out-of-country missions flown. The search and rescue commitment has been increased and the Thai H-34 Helicopters have taken the responsibility of performing all in-country civic action missions previously performed by the 20th Helicopter Squadron.

2. (U) Two CH-3C Helicopters and crews were sent to Nha Trang to fly support missions with the 20th Helicopter Squadron UH-1F's stationed there. However, they returned to Udorn at the end of the month to enable the Squadron at Udorn to meet the search and rescue requirement and continue with it's increased C-S mission.

3. (U) The 20th Helicopter Squadron, "Pony Express", continued to back up the Jolly Green Giants and flew 26 hours, 55 minutes in support of this search and rescue (S.R) effort. The 20th maintained an average of 1.75 aircraft a day on a 15 minute alert status in order to replace the Jolly Green, should they be scrambled from their forward staging bases. Approximately 1,945 alert crew man hours was maintained during March. On 12 March the 20th had two aircraft, "Pony Express" 21, 22, rescue a downed RF-101 pilot in hostile territory. Pony 21 was low bird and made the pick-up.

4. (U) On 20 March a three ship formation of ponies drew a considerable abount of enemy automatic weapons fire while on an emergency exfiltration in Steel Tiger. The mission was hindered by poor visibility, an extremely hazardous landing zone, and the known presence of several hundred enemy troops in the immediate area. Despite the fact that one of the Ponies had been hit and the F-105 cover aircraft were completely lost and useless for support, the mission was successfully accomplished. This mission gives concrete proof that jet fighter support is not compatable with the Pony Express mission because of the following reasons:

a. Jet fighters cannot maneuver at the low altitudes and airspeeds necessary to properly support and provide adequate cover for our helicopters.

b. Jet fighters are fuel limited and cannot remain over target long enough to give the Ponies time to accomplish their mission.

c. Jet fighters cannot provide adequate escort on the route to and from the target because they cannot go slow enough and maneuver tight enough to keep the Ponies in sight.

[redacted]

67-497

[redacted]

5. (U) On 19 March Pony Express 82 performed an emergency medical evacuation of Army personnel from Sakon Nakhon to Korat. Departing Udorn at 1100 gm local and arriving at Korat 0200 am local.

6. (C) Squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours flown	496+00
Sorties flown	421
Passengers Carried	938
Cargo Carried	42,210

Eight Aircraft Assigned/Eight Operational
(682 still at Bangkok for repairs, 681 assigned to Ram Team for repairs)

Incommission Rate	74%
Aircraft Utilization Rate	62 Hours/Aircraft
A/C Utilization Auth	50 Hours per A/C

Personnel Authorized		Personnel Assigned
APG	35	25
Flt Mech	16	19
Specialist	33	30
Pilots	31	33
Administrative		2

7. (C) Despite rumors and conflicting press articles no offical media has been released changing the unit designation to the 20th Air Commando Squadron. We remain the 20th Helicopter Squadron.

[redacted]

67-497

[redacted]

March Historical Report
20th Helicopter Sq.
Tan Son Nhut

1. The History of the 20th Helicopter Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base, RVN during the period of 1 March 67 through 31 March 67 is as follows:

A. The number of CH-3C aircraft assigned during this period was three. Aircraft #690 is out of commission due to battle damage. The number of UH-1F's was two.

B. The number of CH-3C pilots was 13 during this period. 7 UH-1F pilots were assigned here during this period. (All entries after this when refering to the 2 different types aircraft will be as follows: CH-3C/UH-1F).

C. A total of 225:30 combat flying hours were compiled on 429 sorties; 88,497 pounds of cargo and 607 passengers were airlifted during this period. These figures can be further broken down into aircraft types as follows: 129:35/95:55 combat flying hours compiled on 214/215 sorties, 29,185/59,312 pounds of cargo and 269/338 passengers were airlifted during this period. These figures can again be broken down further as follows:

1) Combat hours flown in primary support of: Air Force: 43:40/74:40; Army: 85:55/18:20 and Other: 0/2:55.

2) Sorties flown in support of: Air Force: 41/182; Army: 173/24 and Other: 0/9.

3) Pounds of Cargo airlifted for: Air Force: 5,575/36,062; Army: 17,810/23,250 and Other: 5,800/0.

4) Passengers airlifted for: Air Force: 94/283; Army: 158/38 and Other: 17/17.

D. The largest proportion of CH-3C flying effort for the month was in support of the classified mission with Army. It consisted of 60:50 combat hours flown, 572 passengers carried and 1350 pounds of cargo that were airlifted.

E. The total flying effort for the UH-1F's was divided about equally amongest a varity of missions. The most common missions were VIP support. FAC support and the airlifting of food.

F. The courier was cancelled this month due to the change in primary mission of the CH-3C.

G. The Trojan Horse was flown by the UH-1F's eleven times. Thirty-eight passengers and 4,610 pounds of cargo were airlifted and 6:50 combat hours were flown.

[redacted]

[redacted]

H. On 25 March while carrying out the classified mission two aircraft received battle damage from small arms. The aircraft piloted by Major Cates, Joseph R., received moderate damage and the aircraft piloted by Captain Anderson, Willard C., received extensive damage and is still out of commission. Captain Anderson and crew were nominated for the Silver Star; Major Cates and crew were nominated for the Distinguished Flying Cross.

FOR THE COMMANDER

James V. Sheridan Jr.

JAMES V. SHERIDAN, JR., 1/Lt, USAF
20th Helicopter Squadron

[redacted]

[redacted]

History of "E" Flight, 20th Helicopter Squadron
1 January 1967 - 31 March 1967

Prepared by:
Captain James W. Daniels Jr.
"E" Flight Historian

Approved:

JOHN W. ELFTMANN JR.
Major, USAF

[redacted]

20 HS
67-002

[redacted]

1. Commander:

The Flight Commander at the first of the quarter was Lt. Col. Robert Brochman. When his 179 TDY ended on 17 January he was replaced by Lt. Col. Robert L. Hess. Upon the completion of his 60 day TDY Col. Hess was replaced by (Major Robert L. Baldwin KILLED IN ACTION 1967) for the duration of the quarter. ($)

2. Mission:

The mission of the flight should be broken into two sections:

a. While in Thailand assigned to the 606th Air Commando Squadron, Royal Thai Air Base, Nakhon Phanon, the mission was to teach the Thai Army and Air Force to coordinate their efforts for maximum effectiveness, and to support other USAF activities such as Civic Action teams, USAID, and USOM.

b. When the flight moved to Nha Trang, Republic of Vietnam, to become part of the 20th Helicopter Squadron, 14th Air Commando Wing; it had no mission. Steps were taken by 7th Air Force to generate a mission with MAC SOG. This was accomplished on 15 February and involved the use of armed Air Force helicopters. THE 1ST

3. Operations:

The operations from 1 January to 17 January consisted of supporting the Air Force Civic Action teams and helping USOM teams install radios in many small villages in Northeast Thailand.

On 17 January 30 pilots returned to the ZI, having completed their 179 TDY period. They were replaced by 18 pilots TDY for 60 days from the ZI, 4 PCS pilots from the 20th Helicopter Squadron, and 8 pilots reassigned from the 38th Air Rescue Squadron. These people plus the original 6 PCS pilots brought the maning to 36 pilots.

[redacted]

[redacted]

The normal operation all but ceased at this time as all the new personnel had to be trained by the original 6 PCS pilots.

On 30 January word was received from PACAF that all 15 UH-1F aircraft were to be removed from Thailand by the end of the next day. On 31st of January all but two aircraft were ferried to Nha Trang, Republic of Vietnam, to become "E" flight of the 20th Helicopter Squadron. The remaining two aircraft were allowed to remain in Thailand long enough to finish a flood relief mission they were doing at the request of the King and Queen.

Upon arriving at Nha Trang the Flight continued their training while a mission was being sought. The mission received from MAC SOG involved the use of armed helicopters so a Test and Evaluation Program was conducted on several weapon systems. The program was a success and on 19 February 4 armed UH-1F's performed their first MACSOG mission with outstanding results.

Air Force intrest at the Chief of Staff level arouse over the program as this was the only armed Air Force helicopter operation in history.

Several times during early stages of operation activities we stopped because of Roles and Mission Agreements conflicts. However, during these periods, unarmed UH-1F's performed a number of outstanding missions. During one such mission, on 31 March, the Flight Commander, Major Robert L. Baldwin was KIA and became the first fatality of the flight. ($)

4. Personnel:

At the time of this history there is no UMD of any personnel for the flight. (U)

5. Equipment: The flight consisted of 14 UH-1F helicopters (one having been lost on 31 March). Of the 14, only 3 have the necessary modifications to adequately handle the MACSOG mission.

[redacted]

The 11 unmodified aircraft had the armored seats installed and the self-sealing fuel tanks arrived, but could not be installed because of a lack of parts. None of the 11 aircraft had FM radios that were necessary for the mission.

The four original aircraft were modified to use the 7.62 Mini-Gun and 2.75 rocket launchers. ($)

6. Facilities:

The operations building inadequate due to it's small size and location. This problem will be removed with the construction of the new building which has been approved. (U)

7. Logistical Support:

The logistical support was very bad during the quarter. Modifications that were approved were not made due to a lack of parts. Certain parts needed to keep the aircraft flying were obtained from the Army helicopter units on a "Lend and Trade" basis. (U)

8. Plans:

No future plans were made due to a possible change in the near future. (U)

9. Problem Areas:

A. Mission - The lack of a definate mission caused an inefficiency in aircraft utilization. During February and March flying time reached an all time low of 27.5 hos/mo/ac.

B. Personnel - The failure of the Air Force to provide permanent personnel greatly hampered the operational effectiveness. Too much time was spent training new personnel. Also the lack of constant leadership caused difficulties.

[redacted]

C. Location and Mission - The complete relocation of the flight did much to decreas .ts effectiveness. This necessitated a change in mission which delayed the establishment of an efficient operation that comes from stability.

A definate mission, proper equipment, and permanent personnel would solve the major problems of the flight. (U)

10. Community Relations:

None during this quarter. (U)

11. Awards and Decorations:

None during this quarter. (U)

12. Morale:

The morale of the flight is high despite the before mentioned problems. All personnel feel that there is a definate need for armed helicopters in the Air Force. (U)

13. Other:

It is hoped that because of the outstanding accomplishments of the unit this past quarter, the Air Force will give greater attention to armed helicopters and their importance. (U)

[redacted]

20th Helicopter Squadron (20HS)

($) The first quarter of 1967 was a period of change for the 20th Helicopter Squadron. The squadron continued operations in Civic Actions, humanitarian airlift, translocation of commodities and counterinsurgency. Headquarters remained at Nha Trang with operating locations at Udorn (Thailand), Tan Son Nhut and Nha Trang.

($) Operations differed as widely as locations for flights of the squadron. At Tan Son Nhut, "A" Flight, CH-3Cs belonging to the squadron, ferried passengers and cargo in South Vietnam and provided airlift for Seventh Air Force personnel.

($) At Udorn, "B", "C" and "D" Flight efforts were directed toward counterinsurgency activities, moving friendly forces, military and police personnel to outlying locations and positioning [redacted]

($) Nha Trang's "E" Flight consisted of Bell UH-1F helicopters which joined the wing on January 31. These helicopters came from the 606th Air Commando Squadron at Nakhon Phanon, Thailand. The UH-1F mission was to teach the Thai Army and Air Force to coordinate efforts for maximum effectiveness, and to support other USAF activities such as civic actions and U.S. government agencies. 15 UH-1Fs were assigned to the 20th, but only 13 came from Thailand immediately. The other two remained to finish a flood relief mission. Upon assignment to the wing, the new flight had no direct mission assignment but continued to train their personnel.[59]

59. Ltr, LtCol Hess, "E" Flight Cmdr, to 606ACS, "PCS Move of UH-1F Helicopters", Doc 22. (U)

(S) Arrival of the UH-1Fs in the squadron did not effect the other flights during this period. At Tan Son Nhut, squadron 'Big Charlies' (CH-3C) flew a total of 688:40 combat flying hours, compiling 1,428 sorties, carrying 783,395 pounds of cargo and 2,202 passengers. Largest proportion of total flying effort was flying munitions support for forward air controllers. Squadron helicopters carried 313,438 pounds of munitions in 214 sorties for a total flying time of 160:55 hours on this one mission.[60]

(U) Construction of sites in out-of-the-way places was another job given to 'Big Charlies' at Tan Son Nhut. Two such sites were built in January; one, Hon Tre Island, was located three miles off-shore at Nha Trang, the other, Con Son Island, was located 45 miles off-shore from the southeastern coast of Vietnam. 102,000 pounds of equipment and supplies were hauled to the two islands during the building.[61]

(C) The flight had some exciting moments during the period. On the evening of January 9, the U.S. Navy called upon 'Big Charlies' to help extract a Navy 'SEAL' team that had been discovered by the enemy in the Saigon Delta Region. Two aircraft were sent after a minimum briefing consisting mostly of the team's location. The two aircraft were covered by two Navy gunships. As the first aircraft went in and started pick-up, the hoist failed and the 'Big Charlie' crew was forced to use a 'McGuire Rig' to extract the three men. The men had to hang on and be towed through the air until a suitable pick-up point could be located and they could be put on the ground for pick-up. The second aircraft went in and effected the extract of the Navy Seal Team, only drawing slight ground fire.[62]

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60. Rpt, 20HS, Hist Rpt 1Jan-31Mar67, Appendix 6. (S)
61. Ibid.
62. Ibid.

($) In mid-February, the flight moved operations to Kontum AB, RVN and returned to Tan Son Nhut only for maintenance. The mission was highly classified, but it can be said the mission was in support of the U.S. Army. A total of 91 sorties and 51:45 hours were flown here. Another mission, also highly classified, was flown by the 'Big Charlies' from Da Nang AB, RVN. At the end of the reporting period, no information was available about this exploit. One CH-3C aircraft was so badly damaged on one of these missions that it was unrepairable in-country and was sent back to the United States.[63]

(U) Throughout the period the flight continued to fly in support of 'Trojan Horse', sometimes one of the new UH-1F aircraft was scheduled for this mission as the 'Big Charlies' were unavailable.

(¢) The flight had three CH-3Cs during this reporting period and were supplemented with two UH-1Fs in January, three in February and seven in March. The flight had 13 pilots, and anticipated no manning problems.[64]

($) Operations at Udorn continued with "A", "B" and "C" Flights working with the CAS mission and the United States Overseas Mission (USOM) during this reporting period.

($) In support of USOM, the squadron airlifted passengers and cargo to install small very high frequency (VHF) radios in several isolated villages in Northeast Thailand. These radios were to be used by village chiefs to advise Thai police of Communist attacks and activity.

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63. Minutes, Staff Meeting Minutes, 20Feb67. (U)
64. Interview, 20HS, Hist with LtCol J. Amidon, 5May67, (U)

(S) UKM mission accomplishments were:[65]

Hours Flown	88:25
Cargo	53,945
Passengers	1,201

(U) During the last reporting period, the Wing Commander sent the squadron commander to Udorn to be with the largest number of aircraft. During this reporting period, the administrative support and supply lines moved back to Nha Trang. The squadron had one change of command during the reporting period. Lt Col John W. Amidon assumed command of the growing squadron while Lt Col Johnny T. Williams rotated back to the United States.

(U) With the squadron headquarters, administration and supply channels all at Nha Trang, supply problems were no longer evident. The squadron had ten aircraft still at Udorn.[67]

65. Rpt, 20AF, Hist Sum 1Jan-31Dec67, Appendix 6. S)
66. Ibid.
67. Ibid.

($) Throughout the reporting period, Udorn flights continued to back-up Jolly Green Giants' (rescue) operation at Udorn. They assisted in a rescue on February 20 in which an F-105 pilot was picked up deep in North Vietnam.

($) A rather unusual mission occurred on February 23 when two aircraft from Udorn penetrated deep into North Vietnam to evacuate a friendly intelligence team that had been working in the North for four years. Weather was a great hinderance. When they reached the pick-up point, the intelligence team was nowhere to be found. The two aircraft searched the area despite low ceilings and automatic weapons fire, until one of the aircraft was hit with 50 caliber automatic fire. Despite a very badly damaged helicopter the pilot nursed it back to a staging base. The team was not rescued.

($) Combined squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:[68]

Hours Flown	1327:05
Sorties Flown	1,451
Passengers	4,073
Cargo	218,280

(S) Air Force interest at Chief of Staff level was around over the program, this is the only armed Air Force helicopter operation in History. Several times during the early stages of operation, activities were stopped because of roles and mission agreements conflicts. However, during these periods, unarmed UH-1Fs performed a number of outstanding missions. During one such mission, Major Robert L. Baldwin, "E" Flight commander was killed in action, and became the flight's first fatality.[70]

(U) Squadron UMD had no authorization for UH-1F personnel during the period.[71] Most of the personnel that came from Thailand with the new Flight were on a temporary duty assignment (TDY) for 179 days. After the relocation was settled, pilot strength was up to 36. The squadron acquired six pilots from the 38th Air Rescue Squadron.

(U) After the loss of Major Baldwin's aircraft, flight strength was reduced to 14 UH-1Fs. Of the 14, only three have the necessary modifications to adequately handle the MACSOG mission. The 11 unmodified aircraft had armored seats installed. Self-sealing tanks had arrived, but could not be installed because of lack of parts. Four original aircraft were modified to use the 7.62 mini-gun and one of these was equipped with 2.75 rocket launcher.[72]

(U) Logistical support was also inadequate during the period. Approved modifications were not made because of lack of parts. Certain vital parts to keep the aircraft flying were obtained from helicopter units on a lend and trade basis. This problem combined with having no mission contributed greatly to inefficiency in aircraft utilization, and a very low flying time rate in February and March.[73]

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70. AF Fm 642, 20HS, Recomndtn for Awd of AF Cross, 31Mar67, Doc 23. (U)
71. Rpt, 14COG, 20HS UMD Jan & Mar, on file 14AOW I.G. (U)
72. Msg, 14AOW, to 7AF, "UH-1F [illegible] Mission", Mar67, Doc 24. (S)
73. Ltr, DOM, to 14AOW, "UH-1F Modification", 28Feb67, Doc 25. (U)

(U) Complete relocation of the flight did much to decrease its effectiveness. This necessitated a change in mission which delayed the establishment of an efficient operation coming from stability.

(U) Morale of the new flight was high despite the many problems of settlement. Wing personnel hope Air Force will give greater attention to armed helicopters and their importance.[74]

74. Rpt, 2OTS, Hist for 1Jan.-31Dec67, Appendix 6. (S)

[redacted]

History of 20th Helicopter Squadron
1 April 1967 - 30 June 1967

227220
CATALOGED

Prepared by:

1st Lt James R. Brown

Squadron Historian

Approved:

JOHN W. AMIDON
Lt Col, USAF

[redacted]

20 HS
67-008
A

[redacted]

From 1 April 1967 through 30 June 1967 the 20th Helicopter Squadron continued to perform its mission with the headquarter's situated at Nha Trang AB, Vietnam, the UH-1F helicopters operating from the same base, and the CH-3C helicopters performing missions from operating locations at Tan Son Nhut AB, Vietnam and Udorn RTAFB, Thailand.

The primary operation during this period for the CH-3C helicopters at the Tan Son Nhut AB location was the delivery of film for the 6470th Recon Sqdn; the secondary operation was VIP support for MACV and 7th Air Force personnel. Support was also given to Operation "Trojan Horse."

(C) A total of 371:20 combat hours were flown on 999 sorties; 293,212 pounds of cargo and 2345 passengers were airlifted during this period; these figures can be broken down further as follows:

Combat hours flown in primary support of: Air Force: 285:30.
Army: 48:25. Other: 37:25.

Sorties flown in support of: Air Force: 785. Army: 122.
Other: 108.

Pounds of cargo airlifted for: Air Force: 183,087. Army: 55,350.
Other: 54,775.

Passengers airlifted for: Air Force: 1359. Army: 287. Other: 699

The 6470th Recon Sqdn courier required 204 sorties, 95:45 combat flying hours, and 11,011 pounds of film were airlifted.

The "Trojan Horse" was flown 26 times; 7,040 pounds of cargo were airlifted and 14:50 combat hours were flown.

(U) In order to fulfill operational requirements during this period it was

[redacted]

[redacted]

necessary to utilize the Squadron's UH-1F's. Two UH-1F's were used at various times for short periods. The UH-1F's have returned to Nha Trang.

The flight was authorized 12 pilots and 27 maintenance personnel during this period. The flight actually utilized 13 pilots and 28 maintenance men. Captain William L. Johnson rotated back to the states on 20 June and Captain Gerald E. Klemm arrived on 21 June to replace him. The overage of one pilot has enabled Major Clifton E. Ward, to devote full time to the requirements as flight commander. This overage has given the scheduling officer considerable latitude in covering for officers on TDY and R&R. Having a full compliment plus one extra of maintenance men has enabled CMSgt Wood, the line chief, to split his men into two shifts; morning and afternoon. The morning crew crew is responsible for the launch of the aircraft and normal maintenance and the afternoon crew is responsible for the recovery of the aircraft and also normal maintenance

(ℓ) A problem with supply has been the "double issue". On several occassions when a part was requested, supply would issue the part and then re-order the part and issue a second one in the next few days. This results in a duplication of work on the part of supply.

(ℓ) Future plans still call for our support of SOG operations. These plans are contingent on the modification of the aircraft.

[redacted]

[redacted]

(¢) A major problem during this period was assigned aircraft parking area. It was directed by 7th AF that the aircraft would be removed from the parking area in front of Base Operations. After several moves to unsatisfactory parking areas, which created safety hazards, the aircraft were again parked in front of Base Operations awaiting the construction of a new parking ramp. The new area is located at the West end of the revetments between the runway and the parallel taxiway. The construction of this ramp was 90% complete on this ending quarter. A continuing problem is the need for modification of assigned aircraft. This flight could accomplish a wider variety of missions if the aircraft were equipped with the T-58-GE-5 engines, armor plating and FM radios. Action is still pending on request for these modifications.

(U) From 25 June to 29 June the flight flew several sorties delivering building supplies, construction workers and equipment to the crash site of C-121. The crash destroyed two Vietnamese houses. An Air Force Civic action team was dispatched to rebuild these houses. The area was inaccessible by motor vehicle with the nearest road being approximately two miles away. The flights assistance to the team greatly shortened the time required for rebuilding.

(U) On 18 June, Col Rouscher presented Distinguished Flying Crosses to Maj Clifton E. Ward, Lt James V. Sheridan, Jr., Lt William K. Rader, SSgt Edward D. Erickson and A1C Larry E. Withrow.

[redacted]

[redacted]

(U) Major John Elftmann took command of the UH-1F Flight at the death of Major Robert Baldwin on 31 March 1967. Major Elftmann held this position until 21 June 1967 when he was relieved by Major E.E Magee. Major Elftmann was scheduled to return to the CONUS having completed his one year PCS tour to SEA. Major Magee had been the UH-1F Section Commander in Thailand during his 179 days TDY.

(U) At the end of this quarter, the UH-1F Flight still did not have an official mission. There were no operations orders or mission directives in existance. Until such time as a mission was determined, The UH-1F Flight received verbal approval of DASC Alpha and TACC to solicit suitable missions from local agencies. The following local missions were obtained in this manner: II Coastal Zone (USN); RECONDO, 5th Special Forces Group (USA); Nha Trang Sector (USA); and Daily Administrative Flights to Cam Ranh Bay. Other piecemeal missions that were flown were: A Frag Mission for Two armed UH-1F's from MACSOG for the period 2 June to 30 June 1967; A Fragged Mission for leaflet drops in support of the 9th ACS; A verbal order (no frag) to send two armed UH-1F's to Bihn Thuy to assist in base defense from 9 May to 30 May 1967.

(U) Normal operations of the UH-1F Flight consisted of coastal Recon patrols daily, with two UH-1F's, for the II Coastal Zone (USN), daily administrative flights to Cam Ranh Bay, and training of the new PCS pilots. Major Elton Magee took over as flight commander on 21 June 67.

[redacted]

(S) Special operations consisted of leaflet drops for the 9th ACS, Armed operations for MACSOG, base defense for Binh Thuy Air Base, and two UH-1F's which went to Thailand to support the 46th Special Forces. While there, these two aircraft also worked with the Thai "Queens Cobras" in preparation for their going to Vietnam in the fall.

(S) Two UH-1F's had been "lost" by the end of this quarter; one to enemy ground fire, and one due to an accident during training. There was no word of replacements for these aircraft. This gave a total of 13 aircraft in the flight.

(S) All aircraft were to be modified with FM radios, self sealing tanks and armored seats. At the end of the quarter, only the seats had been installed in all the aircraft, and eight had FM radios. Only the three armed aircraft had self sealing fuel tanks. These inadequacies were caused by a lack of parts and material. Without these modifications, the aircraft can not be used safely and effectively in many combat areas where it is badly needed.

(U) Plans to have the flight operations facilities moved to a new location on the flight line have been made.

(S) The possibility of moving the operations from Nha Trang to Pleiku are being considered. If the mission for MACSOG were to become permanent, this move would be highly desirable, if not absolutely necessary.

[redacted]

(S) The most pressing problem of the UH-1F Flight was the lack of a definite mission. This caused much difficulty in planning future operations as no one knew what to expect. The morale of the pilots suffered accordingly because of not having any real goal or purpose. This problem has repeatedly been brought to the attention of Colonel Rauscher, Commander of the 14th ACW and 7th AF Headquarters.

A problem of even more pressing importance was aircraft maintenance. The level of maintenance was so low as to have an adverse effect on pilot morale. One aircraft was "lost" on a training mission with all personnel receiving injuries. Probable cause of accident: Power loss. Several aircraft were safely landed in the field after experiencing mechanical difficulties. This problem was one of improper personnel replacement. Only eight of fifty-eight maintenance personnel had any helicopter experience before being sent to the 20th Helicopter Squadron. The majority are cross trainees with no experience. The only solution to this problem is to train all personnel as quickly as possible and insure that properly trained personnel are assigned in the future.

The last major problem was untrained pilots. Because of the varied experience levels of the pilots assigned, much time was spent in upgrad training. This training should be accomplished in the CONUS so that maximum utilization could be made of each pilot when he arrived in SEA.

[redacted]

Footnotes

1.

2. 20th Helicopter Sq. Order No. 14, 21 June 1967.

3. Ltr., Commander, 14th ACW to Deputy Commander for Operations, HQ. 7th Air Force, 17 May 1967. (Conf.)

4. Ibid.

5. 7th AF TACC/TACPS 09863 June 67. (Secret)

6. Frag No. 6-600-3.

7. Ltr., Commander, 14th ACW to Deputy Commander for Operations, HQ. 7th Air Force, 17 May 1967. (Conf)

8. 7th AF TACC/DOO 18436 Mar 67. (Secret)

9. See the Director of Maintenance, 14th ACW, History for this quarter.

10. 7th AF/DM 32850 Mar 67. (Secret)

11. Interview by James W. Daniels Jr., "E" Flight Historian, with Major Thomas Bass, "E" Flight Operations Officer, 26 June 67.

12. Ltr., Commander, 20th Helicopter Sq. to DCO, 14th ACW, 24 June 67.

13. Ltr., Commander, 14th ACW to Deputy Commander for Operations, HQ. 7th AF, 17 May 1967.

14. Interview by "E" Flight Historian with Captain Thomas Lambert, "E" Flight Maintenance Officer, 30 June 1967.

[redacted]

(U) Morale was very high during this period as most of the men received their assignments and some their port calls.

LIST OF AWARDS AND DECORATIONS
FOR
"E" FLIGHT

Amidon, John W.	Lt Col	AM (B)	22 Apr 1967
Allen, Robert D.	Capt	AM (B)	18 Apr 1967
Baldwin, Robert L.	Maj	AM (B)	20 May 1967
Castro, George A.	A1C	AM (B)	20 May 1967
Vasquez, Louis	Capt	SS	
Dare, Franklin M.	1st Lt	AM (6)LC)	29 May 1967
Elftmann, John W.	Maj	AM (B)	22 Apr 1967
Feigert, David J.	1st Lt	AM (60LC)	10 May 1967
Graves, Ralph C.	SSgt	AM (B)	22 Apr 1967
Gunnin, William W.	1st Lt	AM (60LC)	10 May 1967
Harris, Donald R.	1st Lt	AM (6-70LC)	1 June 1967
Hubbard, Warren S.	1st Lt	AM (B)	29 May 1967
Madigan, Richard E.	Capt	AM (B)	26 May 1967
Packer, Robert W.	1st Lt	AM (1-50LC)	20 May 1967
Shuey, Ralph A.	Capt	AM (B)	29 May 1967
Stiles, Ralph W.	1st Lt	AM (1-30LC)	10 May 1967
Smith, Richard P.	Maj	AM (10LC)	27 Apr 1967
		AM (20LC)	20 May1967
Studley, Warren R.	A1C	AM (B)	20 May 1967
Vivano, Joseph L.	1st Lt	AM (B)	26 May 1967
Foster, Royal E., Jr.	Capt	AFCM	28 Apr 1967

[redacted]

HISTORICAL REPORT-UDORN
April 1967

1. (S) The mission for the 20th Helicopter Squadron at Udorn remains unchanged. Our primary commitments were to support the [redacted] and S.R operations. The only other missions flown were in support of United States Armed Forces in Thailand and Laos and a few isolated emergency medical evacuations.

2. (S) The [redacted] program continued to call upon the Ponies for increased support. The CH-3Cs flew 342 hours 15 minutes, in 265 sorties, carrying 12,260 pounds of cargo and 521 troops, during April for this clandestine operation. An effort was made to place as many teams as possible along the Ho Chi Minh Trail before the monsoon season set in. These teams were no longer just roadwatch teams; several of the recently infiltrated teams were primarily strike teams. Their mission is to search for and destroy any enemy supplies and trucks. They also act as forward Air Controllers for USAF fighters all along the Viet Cong Supply Routes in Laos. It has been estimated [redacted] that 85% to 95% of all fragged strikes in Laos are a result of the information provided by the teams infiltrated by the Ponies at Udorn.*

3. (S) Again in April it seems that the stalwart Ponies

* It is impossible to document this statement to its original source because of the extremely high security restrictions placed [redacted]

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carried the famed Jolly Green Giants on their backs. The CH-3C's logged 596 hours of SAR alert time, nearly 1000 hours of alert crew man hours, and equal to over 33% of the total SAR commitment at Udorn. This was in addition to all the other commitments the Ponies had in April. The Ponies flew 40 aircrew recovery sorties in 43 hours, 55 minutes, flying time.

4. (S) In addition to the primary [redacted] and SAR commitments, the Pony Express at Udorn was always on call to give support to the base and any other agency in need of our versatile helicopter. During April a few typical missions flown by the CH-3C's were: On 7 April 1967, one H-3C flew explosive ordnance disposal and medical personnel to a mistakenly bombed villiage in Laos. On 11 April, a Pony lifted a crashed Royal Thai Air Force T-34 helicopter from a rice paddy to a nearby air base for repair. On the night of 13 April, a Pony was scrambled to evacuate an injured United States soldier from a remote outpost to the hospital at Korat Air Base. This was just one of many medical evacuations the Ponies completed in April. The CH-3C's also flew numerous flights in support of the Base Photo Lab.

5. (S) Squadron Accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours flown	469+30
Sorties flown	513

[redacted]

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[redacted]

Passengers carried	730
Cargo carried	51,480

Eight aircraft assigned/eight operational (682 at Bangkok for repair, 681 assigned to the M.I team for repair).

Incommission rate	77%
A/C Utilization rate	58.7 hrs per A/C
A/C Utilization with .50 hours per A/C	

[redacted]

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[redacted]

HISTORICAL REPORT - UDORN
May 1967

1. (U) The mission for the 20th Helicopter Squadron at Udorn remained unchanged. Our primary commitments were to support the [redacted] and SAR operations. Numerous miscellaneous missions were flown in support of United States Armed Forces in Thailand and Laos. During May the Ponies at Udorn flew an unprecedented 671 hours using the same CH-3C's that flew only 299 hours in September 1966. This tremendous increase in aircraft utilization stems from a much improved maintenance section and the overall 200% effort put forth by the entire detachment at Udorn.

2. (U) In a final push before the rainy season, the Ponies flew 501 hours in 452 sorties in support of the [redacted] mission. The CH-3C's carried 592 troops and 46,230 pounds of cargo, truly an unprecendented feat by the Pony Express. Seventy-five remote landings were made on or near the Ho Chi Minh Trail inserting and extracting [redacted] teams.

3. (U) During May the Ponies stood 385 hours, 40 minutes of SAR alert and flew 26 hours, 15 minutes in 21 aircrew recovery sorties in support of the search and rescue effort at Udorn.

4. (U) The 20th at Udorn also flew several missions in support of United States Armed Forces in Thailand and Laos. The CH-3C's flew 66 hours in 63 sorties, carrying 10,400 pounds of cargo and 60+ troops, in support of the United States Army

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Special Forces in Thailand. The Ponies provided the airlift for numerous practice assaults and air drops. The Pony Express also provided support for the calibration and inspection of the four tacan sites in Laos (channels 72, 77, 79, and 97) by airlifting both men and equipment to these remote outposts. The CH-3C's were instrumental in calibrating the new "Sky Spot" bombing radar station at Nakohn Phanom Air Base, Thailand. This station is responsible for guiding both bombers and fighters to pinpoint targets, regardless of the weather conditions over the target area.

5. (C) Squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours flown	671:00
Sorties flown	632
Passengers carried	1708
Cargo carried	66,060

Nine aircraft assigned/Eight operational (662 returned from Bangkok but not fully operational; 661 assigned to the RAH team for repair)

Incommission rate	81%
A/C utilization rate	74.4 hours per A/C
A/C utilization rate	90 hours per A/C

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[redacted]

HISTORICAL REPORT - UDORN
June 1967

1. (S) At Udorn the mission for the 20th Helicopter Squadron remains unchanged. Our principal commitments were to support the [redacted] and SAR operations. A few missions were flown in support of United States Armed Forces in Thailand and Laos.

2. (S) An increased number of weather aborts occurred in June as a result of the monsoon season. There were 270 sorties flown in support [redacted] during the month. The Ponies flew 328 hours and 15 minutes while carrying 653 troops and 72,535 pounds of cargo. Weather conditions were very marginal on many of the missions that were successfully completed.

3. (S) The 20th Helicopter at Udorn provided 623 hours, 15 minutes of SAR alert time in support of the Jolly Green Giants. In addition, 62 hours, 20 minutes were flown in 51 sorties in support of Search and Rescue missions during June.

4. (U) Eighteen Air Medals and two Air Force Commendations were awarded to members of the 20th Helicopter at Udorn during June. Captain Vasquez of the 20th at Udorn was presented the Silver Star by General Ryan during a formal ceremony at Nha Trang.

5. (S) Squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours flown	476+00
Sorties flown	396
Passengers carried	905

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[redacted]

[redacted]

Cargo carried 84,200

Seven aircraft assigned/Eight operational (681 assigned to RAM team for repair; 676 assigned to RAM team for cracked transmission mount repair; 691 transferred to Tan Son Nhut on 16 June)

Incommission rate 79%

A/C utilization rate 69.5 hours per A/C

A/C utilization authorized 50 hours per A/C

PERSONNEL	1 April	30 June	Authorized
Maintenance Section	76	83	105
Pilots	33	34	30
Admin Clerks	2	2	3
Location Commander	1	1	1

PROBLEM AREAS

The primary problem area in the maintenance section is the procurement of parts. Aircraft 681 could have been repaired almost immediately if the parts were available within a reasonable time period. The same problem is holding up the repair of aircraft 676.

History is again repeating itself; eleven pilots are leaving in July and their replacements are nowhere in sight. These are the same conditions that existed last November.

The 20th, supposedly because of its clandestine nature, has been ignored by the Awards and Decorations Boards at Seventh

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[redacted]

Air Force. Ninety-five percent of the awards submitted have been refused, even though it is felt that they are more than justly deserved. The Squadron gives an open invitation to any Board Member to ride along with us on one of our many missions into North Vietnam and Laos. The Squadron was submitted for an Air Force Outstanding Unit Award by the 14th Air Commando Wing during the period 1 November to 31 March 1967. This award explained our mission in detail and it is hoped that it will enlighten the powers that be at Seventh Air Force.

Nine Sikorsky "Winged S" awards were presented to members of the Squadron at Udorn for various life saving missions. These awards are given by Sikorsky Aircraft Company anytime a life is saved with a Sikorsky helicopter.

REMARKS

Generally, maintenance has improved greatly during this period, as evidenced by the 81% incommission rate during May. Morale is high throughout the unit and there is an overall willingness to cooperate between operations and maintenance. This is an unusual occurrence in most flying organizations.

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DECLASSIFIED

20th Helicopter Squadron (20)

($) Squadron operations continued in two countries and three locations. The mission remained firm except for "E" Flight at Nha Trang, which recently arrived at Nha Trang. A firm mission is under development. Participating in a variety of missions and services, the squadron flew 3,385:50 hours, accounted for 4,430 sorties, 9,320 passengers and 435,040 pounds of cargo during this reporting period.[59]

($) Operations differed as widely as flight locations. At Tan Son Nhut, "A" Flight's CH-3Cs continued to ferry passengers and cargo in South Vietnam and provide airlift for MACV and Seventh Air Force Personnel.

($) At Udorn, "B", "C", and "D" Flights efforts were directed toward counterinsurgency activities, moving friendly forces, military and police personnel to outlying locations and positioning and recovering [redacted].

($) Nha Trang's "E" Flight continued normal operations consisting of Coastal Zone patrols for the U.S. Navy, daily administrative flights to Cam Ranh Bay, and training of new pilots plus missions directed by MACSOG thru Seventh Air Force.[60]

(U) Manning was not a problem during the quarter. All positions in air crew and maintenance slots were filled. However, they were not filled with qualified personnel. Pilots arrived from the States with very little training. This necessitated an extensive training program.[61]

59 Hist, 20HS, 1 Apr-30 June 67, Appendix VI, (S).
60 Interview, Historian and Wing Commander, 11 Aug 67, Subj: 20HS, (S).
61 Hist, 20HS, 1 Apr-30 June 67, Appendix VI, (S).

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(U) A pressing problem during the quarter was aircraft maintenance. At Nha Trang only eight of fifty-eight maintenance personnel had prior helicopter experience before being assigned to the flight. Majority of incoming maintenance personnel were cross-trainees. The flight has set up a ridged training program which should help alleviate the problem.

(S) Two aircraft were lost during the quarter, both UH-1Fs. One was due to enemy ground fire; the other in a training accident. No CH-3C helicopters were lost, but several were grounded for maintenance and battle damage repair for long periods.[62]

(C) At Tan Son Nhut, "A" Flight CH-3Cs were responsible for delivery of film for the 6470th Reconnissance Squadron and airlift support for MACV and Seventh Air Force personnel throughout all of South Vietnam. The flight was fully manned, with two overages: one in a Pilot slot, the other in Maintenance. The overage in pilots was used to catch up on Rest and Recupperation (R&R), long overdue for some of the pilots.

(U) In order to fullfil operational requirements during this period it was necessary to borrow two UH-1Fs from the Nha Trang Flight. Borrowed aircraft and pilots were used for short periods of time when the CH-3Cs were down for maintenance.

(U) A small supply problem for the Tan Son Nhut flight developed during this quarter. On several occasions the flight was issued double supplies. Supply would receive an order for a part, issue it and reorder. In a few days the same part would be issued again. Steps are being taken to correct the situation.

62 IBID

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(∅) A major problem during this period was assigned aircraft parking at Tan Son Nhut. Seventh Air Force directed that the CH-3C aircraft be removed from in front of Base Operations. After several moves to unsatisfactory parking areas, which created safety hazards, the aircraft were again parked in front of Base Operations. This last move, to the old parking area was to be temporary, until a new area located at the west end of the revetments between the runway and the parallel taxiway can be finished. Construction of the new area was 90 percent complete at the end of the quarter.

(∅) The flight felt its mission could be expanded with some modification to the CH-3Cs on hand. New engines, T-58-GE-5, and armor plating, plus FM radios were requested. Action is still pending on request for these modifications.

(∅) "A" Flight Accomplishments:[63]

MONTH	HOURS	SORTIES	PASSENGERS	CARGO-LBS
April	125:00	260	567	82,520
May	125:20	356	811	73,940
June	121:00	398	898	65,800
TOTAL	371:20	1,014	2,276	222,060

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[redacted](U) An increased number of weather aborts occurred in June as a result of the monsoon rains. On the other hand, maintenance problems during the quarter were generally non-existant for the first time in many months. When aircraft were grounded, it was for lack of parts, not maintenance difficulties.

(U) Also during the quarter the "Big Charlies" continued to assist the 37th Aerospace Rescue and Recovery Squadron, Detachment 2, at Udorn, by loaning aircraft and crews to the Jolly Green Giant outfit when none of their own were available.[65]

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64 IBID.
65 Ltr, Cmdr 37th ACRS-20 HS, 6 Jun 67, Appreciation, Doc. 14, (U)

[redacted]

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SECRET

(¢) Accomplishments in the SAR effort:[66]

MONTH	ALERT TIME	SORTIES	HOURS
April	598:00	40	43:55
May	385:40	21	26:15
June	623:15	51	62:20
TOTAL	1,606:55	112	132:30

(¢) Many other sorties were flown that were not in direct alignment with the mission. Support was given to any agency in need of the versatile CH-3C. One of the missions was to support the inspection and calibration of the four Tactical Control of Air Navigation (TACAN) sites in Laos by airlifting men and equipment to the remote sites. Another mission was instrumental in calibrating the new SKY SPOT bombing radar station at Nakohn Phanom Air Base, Thailand. This station is responsible for guiding both bombers and fighters to pinpoint targets, regardless of the weather conditions over the target.

(¢) Total Mission accomplishments at Udorn including CAS and SAR were:[67]

MONTH	HOURS	SORTIES	PASSENGERS	CARGO-LBS
April	469:30	513	905	51,480
May	671:00	632	1,708	66,060
June	476:00	513	730	84,200
TOTAL	1,616:30	1,668	3,343	201,740

(¢) At Nha Trang, "E" Flight (UH-1Fs) still had no mission as an armed copter. At the close of this quarter, a firm mission is under development.[68] The 20th has the only armed helicopters in the USAF inventory at this time.

66 IBID.

67 IBID.

68 Interview, Historian and Wing Cmdr., 11 Aug 67, Subj. 20HS (S). Msg, CAS to ALMAJCOM, 2 May 67, Statement of Agreement, Doc. 15, (U).

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(S) All UH-1F aircraft were to be modified with FM radios, self sealing tanks and armored seats. At the end of the quarter, only the seats had been installed in all aircraft. It was felt that without the modifications the aircraft could not be used safely and effectively in many combat areas where it is badly needed.

(S) Special operations the flight participated in during this period were: Armed operations for MACSOG,[69] base defense for Binh Thuy, and leaflet drops for the 9th Air Commando Squadron. Two UH-1Fs were sent to Thailand to support the 46th Special Forces.[70] While in Thailand these two aircraft and crews worked with the Thai "Queens Cobras" in preparation for their coming to Vietnam in the fall. All MACSOG missions were flown from "L" Flights Forward Operating Base (FOB) at Kontum.[71]

(U) Ramp space and facilities at Nha Trang were excellent throughout the period. Having the T-58 jet engine buildup facility on station was a great help.

(S) Accomplishments for "L" Flight were:[72]

MONTH	HOURS	SORTIES	PASSENGERS	CARGO-LBS
April	348:00	503	1,479	2,500
May	507:00	589	1,153	3,500
June	544:00	656	1,069	5,240
TOTAL	1,398:00	1748	3,701	11,240

(U) The squadron was recommended for the Outstanding Unit Citation during this quarter.[73]

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69 Msg, 7AF to 14ACW, TACPS 09863, 20 June 67, Subj. Rotary Wing Support Doc. 16, (S). Msg, 7AF to 14 ACW, DOD 18456, 31 May 67, Subj. UH-1F Utilization, Doc. 17 (S).

70 Msg, 7AF to 14ACW, DO 18436,28 May 67, Subj. Helicopter Support, Doc. 18. (S)

71 Hist, 20HS, 1 Apr-30 Jun 67, Appendix VI, (S)

72 IBID.

73 Recomendation for award of Outstanding Unit Citation, 20HS 13 Jun 67, Doc. 19, (S)

DECLASSIFIED

(Security Classification - if classified) ~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

HISTORICAL DATA RECORD	REPORTING PERIOD FROM	TO	REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOL
	1 July 1967	30 Sept 1967	AU-D5

FROM: (NAME AND LOCATION OF UNIT SUBMITTING THIS REPORT)

20th Helicopter Squadron
14th Air Commando Wing (PACAF)
APO San Francisco 96205

TO:

14th Air Commando Wing (DXI)
APO San Francisco 96205

IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED FOR ANY ITEM, ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS INDICATING APPLICABLE ITEM NUMBER.

SECTION I — ASSIGNMENT

MAJOR AIR COMMAND	NUMBERED AIR FORCE	AIR DIVISION	WING	GROUP
PACAF	7th		14th Air Commando Wg.	14th Cmbt Spt Gp.

SECTION II — SUBORDINATE UNITS

There are five flights located at three operating locations. "A" Flight, located at Tan Son Nhut AB, "B", "C", and "D" Flights located at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, and "E" Flight at Nha Trang AB, RVN.

SECTION III — MISSIONS

A. PRIMARY

"A" Flight - 6470 Recon Squadron Courier

"B", "C", "D" Flights - Classified

"E" Flight - Classified

PROJECT CORONA HARVEST
DO NOT REMOVE
CATALOGED
No.

B. SECONDARY (OR OTHER)

"A" Flight - VIP Courier, Utility, Rescue.

"B", "C", "D" Flights - Civic Action, Utility, Rescue.

"E" Flight - Utility, Rescue.

SECTION IV — PERSONNEL

STATUS	OFFICERS	AIRMEN	CIVILIANS	TOTAL
ASSIGNED	78	141	4	223
AUTHORIZED	77	109	4	190
ATTACHED		33		33

SECTION V — EQUIPMENT

A. AIRCRAFT

CH-30 - 10

UH-1F - 12

B. WEAPONS (INCLUDING MISSILES)

6 - 7.62 Mini-Guns
6 - 3.75 Rocket Launchers
10 - M-60 Machine Guns

C. ELECTRONICS

N/A

D. OTHER

N/A

SUBJECT TO GENERAL EXEMPTION OF EXECUTIVE ORDER 11652 AUTOMATICALLY DOWNGRADED AT TWO YEAR INTERVALS AND DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS DOD DIR 5200.10

7AF FORM 7
APR 67

(Security Classification - if classified)

INSTRUCTIONS ON INFORMATION TO BE INCLUDED IN THE NARRATIVE

1. *Changes in commanders, key staff officers, and inclusive dates of each incumbent during the reporting period.*

2. *Elaborate on mission-type equipment recorded in Section 5 of this form. Include the quantity at the beginning of reporting period and all additions, losses, transfers, etc., during period covered. Give reason for each loss or transfer. Explain major modifications to unit equipment.*

3. *Operational units include a summary of missions and sorties, hours flown, purpose or objective and results. Report air victims, to include aircraft and pilot losses, pilots missing or rescued. Record unique highlights, details of overall performances (reduced to statistics), tactics used and changes, and other matters bearing on mission performance. Discuss maintenance and supply achievements and problems and significant facility changes.*

SECTION VI NARRATIVE

During this quarter the Commander remained Lieutenant Colonel John W. Amidon. At the beginning of this period there were eleven CH-3Cs and thirteen UH-1F helicopters assigned to the squadron. On 23 August 1967, one CH-3C stationed at Udorn, Thailand was lost while on a classified mission. All personnel were saved but the aircraft could not be recovered due to location (1). On 21 September 1967, one UH-1F was lost to enemy action at Kontum, RVN and both the pilot, Capt Raymond E. Hoffmann, and the co-pilot, 1/Lt James W. Berka were very seriously injuried (2). These personnel were airlifted to the 67th EVAC Hospital, APO 96205, and then to the CONUS (3). These were the only personnel losses during the quarter. No new equipment was used and no new modifications were made during this period.

Alpha flight flew a total of 445+00 hours, 816 sorties, and transported 180,362 pounds of cargo and 1,905 passengers (4).

During the period 5 August 67 to 12 August 67, two CH-3C's left Tan Son Nhut for Udorn to supplement the flights there. Two UH-1F's left Nha Trang for Tan Son Nhut to cover Alpha flights' commitments.

The ramp area for Alpha flight was inadequate because of poor drainage and surface. The air base is providing an adequate ramp in October with a paved surface and revetments. The problem of obtaining supplies, parts, equipment, etc., has been decreased greatly. The assistance at the local level has been excellent. During this period, one Silver Star, eight DFC's, eleven AFCM's, three BSM's and fifteen AM's were awarded (5).

Of special interest was a rescue mission performed on 7 July 1967. Two CH-3C helicopters were scrambled to the crash site of two B-52's that had experienced a mid-air collision. The CH-3C's were the first helicopters to reach the area, which was approximately 65 miles SSE of Tan Son Nhut, in the South China Sea. Between them, they picked up six survivors.

The primary mission of Bravo, Charlie, and Delta flights is classified. All efforts during this period was in support of this mission. In all, they flew 1233 sorties for 1234+00 hours. They transported 2736 passengers and 190.6 tons of cargo (6). No major problems during this period. Apotential problem of receiving many new people at one time will be discussed next period. Also to be discussed at that time will be living facilities on base. This problem is being studied at the close-out time of this report.

Narrative continued, Section VIII, 20th Helicopter Squadron History.

Echo flight has committed itself completely to it's primary mission. The FOB #2 has expanded to handle the increase in personnel and aircraft. A new billets has been built to quarter both officers and airmen. All conditions at the forward operating base have improved greatly. Supplying the operating location remains a problem but is being lessened by experience. There will always be a problem in this area. A personnel problem was starting at the end of the period as many pilots were rotating to the CONUS and the replacements had not arrived. The maintenance problem that had existed previously was rapidly declining as the personnel gained more experience. During this period, the UH-1F's flew 1593 hours on 2018 sorties. They transported 63.1 tons of cargo and 5314 passengers. The armed gun-birds expended 389,800 rounds (7).

20th Helicopter Squadron (20th HS)

(U) The 20th Helicopter Squadron continued to operate from two countries and three locations. All missions remained firm and 'E' Flight at Nha Trang was finally given a firm mission. However, 'E' Flight's primary mission remained highly classified. Its secondary mission consisted of utility and rescue.(67)

(S) At the beginning of the period there were 11 CH-3C and 13 UH-1F helicopters assigned to the squadron. On Aug. 23, one CH-3C stationed at Udorn, Thailand, was lost while on a mission in Laos. All personnel were saved but the aircraft could not be recovered.(68)

(S) First reports on the crash suggested that a CH-54/CH-53 aircraft be used to bring out the downed CH-3C. It was also said that sufficient refueling points were available along the route and that CH-3C escort was available from Udorn to the crash site. The airlift operation to extract the downed aircraft never materialized.(69)

(S) On Sept. 21, a UH-1F was lost to enemy action near Kontum, RVN. The pilot and co-pilot were airlifted back to the United States. These were the only losses to occur during the period.(71)

(S) During the Aug. 5 to 12 period, two CH-3Cs left Tan Son Nhut for Udorn to supplement the flights there. Two UH-1Fs from Nha Trang were sent to cover 'A' Flight's commitments.(71)

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(67) Hist, 20HS, 1Jul-30Sep67, Appendix VI, (C)
(68) Ibid.
(69) Msg, Dep Cmdr 7/13AF to 7AF(C), 2351046, 23Aug67, Subj: Request DOC 21 (S)
(70) Hist, 20HS, 1Jul-30Sep67, Appendix VI, (C).
(71) Ibid.

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~

ANNOTATED BIBLIOGRAPHY

1. Loss to Enemy Action Report, 23 Aug 67, Location: Classified.	This investigation report is classified.
2. Loss to Enemy Action Report, 21 Sep 67, FOE #2.	This investigation report gives the details.
3. Disposition by Transfer Report, Hdqrs. 67th Evac. Hospital, (SLBL), 3 Oct 67.	Report lists all patients and disposition.
4. Monthly Activity Report, (Jul., Aug., Sep.)	These reports describe the activities of each flight for the month.
5. 14th ACW, Awards and Decorations.	
6. Monthly Activity Report, (Jul., Aug., Sep.)	These reports describe the activities of each flight for the month.
7. Monthly Activity Report, (Jul., Aug., Sep.)	These reports describe the activities of each flight for the month.

CONFIDENTIAL

(U) The ramp area for A flight was inadequate because of poor drainage and surface. Tan Son Nhut is scheduled to provide an adequate ramp in October with a paved surface and revetments. The problems of obtaining supplies, parts, equipment, etc., has been greatly decreased. Another problem was in BEMO support. The flight was having a problem because the squadron operations orders had not been published. Currently, the operations order is being retyped prior to publication. Target date for publication is unknown. Efforts by wing operations staff visit have insured that BEMO support will continue until the operations order is published.(72)

(U) During this period, A flight flew a total 445 hours, 816 sorties, and transported 180,362 pounds of cargo and 1,905 passengers.

(U) Of special interest was a rescue mission performed on July 7. Two CH-3Cs were scrambled to the crash site of two B-52s that had a mid-air collision. The CH-3Cs were the first helicopters to reach the area, approximately 65 miles SSE of Tan Son Nhut in the South China Sea. Between them they picked up six survivors.(73)

(U) Primary mission of B, C, and D flights at Udorn remained unchanged. They continued to support Controlled American Sources (CAS) personnel, counterinsurgency activities, and moving friendly forces to outlying locations.

(U) The Udorn based flights flew 1233 sorties for 1234 hours, transported 2736 passengers and 190 tons of cargo this period. None of the flights experienced any great maintenance problems.

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(72) Ltr, Col H.C. Curry to 14ACW(C), 18Aug67, Subj: Opns Staff Visit, DOC 22, (U).
(73) Hist, 20HS, 1Jul-30Sep67, Appendix VI, (C).

(S) Flight E committed itself completely to its primary mission. Operating from Nha Trang and Kontum, the flight expanded to handle the increase in personnel and aircraft. A new billets were built to house both officers and airmen at the FOB, where conditions have greatly improved since the last reporting period.

(S) Supplying the operating location remains a problem but is being lessened by experience. Evidently there will always be a problem in this area.

(U) A personnel problem started to materialize at the end of the quarter as many pilots started to return to the states without replacements being present for duty. No further details were available on this at the close of the period.

(U) The maintenance problem that had existed previously was rapidly declining as new personnel gained additional experience.

(U) During this period, the UH-1Fs flew 1593 hours on 2018 sorties. They transported 63 tons of cargo and 5,314 passengers. The armed gun-birds expended 389,000 rounds.(74)

(S) One of the big problems presently facing the 20th is the lack of CH-3C resources to carry out the many missions and operations under their responsibility. Also, current plans call for the reduction of CH-3Cs from 14 to 10. The four aircraft due to be lost in this transaction will be transferred to the 21st Helicopter Squadron Dec. 1, 1967. The primary mission of the 21st will be Dye Marker Support.

(74) Ibid.
(75) Ltr, Gen W.C. Lindley, PACAF, to 7AF, 432TRW, 14ACW, Subj: Augmntatn of 20th Helio, Thailand Based CH-3C Resources, 6Sep67, DOC 23, (S).

(S) When the transfer of aircraft is experienced, it will leave the squadron with a total force of only 6 aircraft. There are currently 3 aircraft in the United States for repair and are apparently not in the picture for the critical period to come. A lengthy IRAN program, currently in progress, will further deplete the unit by one aircraft for several months to come. This leaves only 5 aircraft, to perform the many missions assigned, CAS/Coach-dog (C), Site 85, USAF/US Mission.(76)

(S) Present plans indicate that rather than allow the 20th in Thailand to function below strength for an unknown period, other rotary wing resources should be considered to augment the Thailand complement. A survey of the tasks performed in conjunction with the missions currently assigned the CH-3C aircraft at Udorn shows, that except for a few large cargo/passenger missions, the UH-1F aircraft can be utilized on currently assigned missions. The performance of the UH-1F is, in fact, better suited to some tasks being performed than the CH-3C. Present opinion is that the UH-1F could perform approximately 90 per cent of the currently assigned missions with a minimum of change in current operations practices.(77)

(S) But again the problem arises of UH-1F availability. It is believed that both Thailand and Kontum could not be supported effectively with the present UH-1F resources.

(S) This problem is currently being studied by the wing for a reasonable solution.

(76) Msg, CONCPACAF to 7AF, 14ACW, 130356Z, 13Sep67, Subj: Thai Based Helicopters, DOC 24, (S).
(77) Msg, Dep Cmdr 7/13AF to CINCPACAF, 14ACW, 2751041, 20Oct67, Subj: Thai Based Helicopter, DOC 25. (S).

Safety

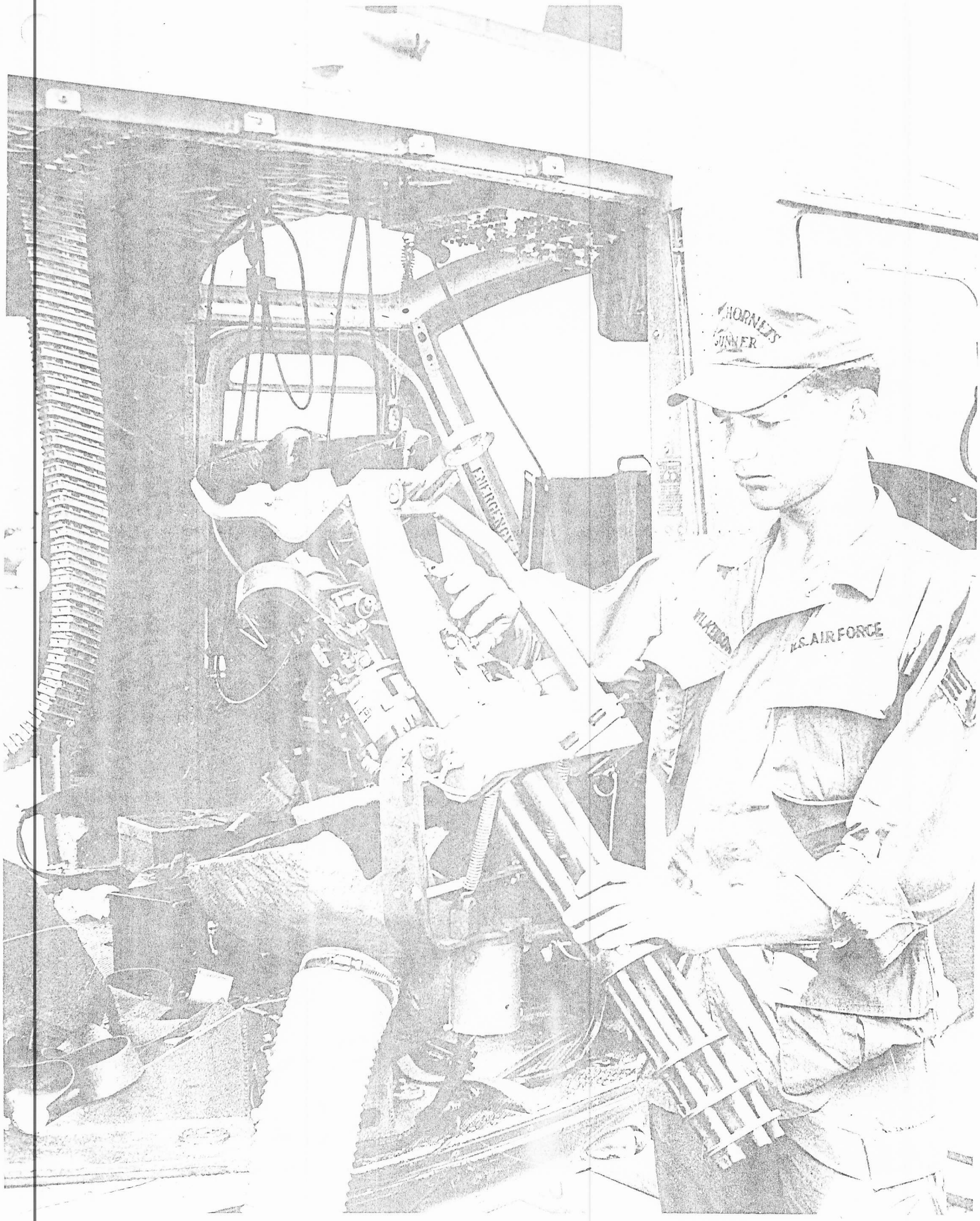
(U) The wing Safety Office continued to monitor 22 unit safety programs and conduct a daily inspection of hazardous areas on base during the quarter.

(U) Safety education films continued to be shown this period, in conjunction with the regular nighttime movie schedule at Nha Trang. Films were made available through quick turn-around mail procedures. This interim method has resulted in exposing a cross section averaging 850 base personnel per film to the safety education films.

(U) Aircraft accident statistics for the quarter showed no major accidents for this period. This was the first time this year that no major accidents occurred in a three consecutive month period.(78)

(78) Hist, Safety Office, 1Jul-30Sep67, Appendix VIII, (U).

A door gunner inspects UH-1F mini-gun prior to mission



~~SECRET~~

~~SECRET SPECAT~~

~~AIR FORCE EYES ONLY~~

Historical Report
20th Helicopter Squadron
1 October 1967 - 31 December 1967

PROJECT CORONA HARVEST
DO NOT DESTROY
No. 9228191
CATALOGED

DOWNGRADED AT 3 YEAR INTERVALS;
DECLASSIFIED AFTER 12 YEARS.
DOD DIR 5200.10

~~SECRET~~

John B. Skidmore

JOHN B. SKIDMORE, Captain USAF
Squadron Historical Officer

20 HS 68-3

~~SECRET~~

ANNOTATED BIBLOGRAPHY

1. 1098 #8403 Location: 14th ACW CBPO.	This order is unclassified.
2. Copy of orders 14th ACW CBPO.	This order is unclassified.
3. 7th Air Force Operations Order 509-68 "20th Helicopter Squadron" dated September 1967 location: DCO file.	This order is classified secret.
4. Summary of interview by Captain J. B. Skidmore, 20th Helicopter Squadron Historian, with Lt. Col. Thomas C. Bass, "E" Flight Commander 18 December 1967.	This interview covered problems, recommended solutions and discussion of classified information.
5. Summary of interview by 20th Helicopter Squadron Historian, with Captain Thomas M. Lambert Maintenance Officer "E" Flight 16 December 1967.	This interview covered problems of "E" Flight Maintenance.
6. Summary of interview by 20th Helicopter Squadron Historian, with 1st Lt Robert W. McComb, Civic Action Project Officer 22 December 1967.	This interview covered the civic action program.
7. Summary of interview by 20th Helicopter Squadron Historian with Major John R. Livermore and Captain Robert P. Strout, pilots in Hornet Flight, 16 December 1967.	This interview discussed the actions of Hornet Flight 20 November 1967.
8. "E" Flight Awards and Decorations Book location: Awards and Decorations Desk "E" Flight.	This book lists all awards and decorations.
9. Letter dated 27 December 1967 from Colonel Hayden C. Curry, Deputy Commander for Operations, 14th ACW.	This letter covers redesignation of Flights, 20th Helicopter Squadron.
10. Historical report, dated 4 January 1968, from Major Anthony E. Azure, Udorn Historical Officer for 20th Helicopter Squadron, location: DCO file.	Report for October, November, December 1967 classified secret.
11. Report from Lt. Col. R. J. Wickwire dated 27 December 1967. Location: 20th Helicopter Historical File.	This report covers radio problems and is unclassified.
12. Monthly Re-Cap UH-1F Sorties ~~SECRET~~ Dated 1 November 1967, 1 December 1967, 1 January 1968; location: DCO file.	These reports are classified Secret SPECAT Air Force Eyes Only.

~~SECRET~~

13. Management Status and Trends Reports: dated 3 November 1967, 2 December 1967, 3 January 1967; Location: 20th Helicopter Squadron Operations File.

These reports are unclassified.

~~SECRET~~

(Security Classification - if classified) FCS 5300

HISTORICAL DATA RECORD

SECRET

REPORTING PERIOD: FROM 1 Oct 67 TO 31 Dec 67

REPORTS CONTROL SYMBOL: AU-DS

FROM: (NAME AND LOCATION OF UNIT SUBMITTING THIS REPORT)
20th Helicopter Squadron
14th Air Commando Wing (PACAF)
APO San Francisco 96205

TO:
14th Air Commando Wing (DXT)
APO San Francisco 96205

IF MORE SPACE IS NEEDED FOR ANY ITEM, ATTACH ADDITIONAL SHEETS INDICATING APPLICABLE ITEM NUMBER.

SECTION I — ASSIGNMENT

MAJOR AIR COMMAND	NUMBERED AIR FORCE	AIR DIVISION	WING	GROUP
PACAF	7th		14th Air Commando Wing	14th Cmbt Spt Gp.

SECTION II — SUBORDINATE UNITS

There are four flights located at three operating locations. "B", "C", and "D" Flights located at Udorn RTAFB, Thailand, and "E" Flight at Tan Son Nhut and Nha Trang AFB, RVN.

SECTION III — MISSIONS

A. PRIMARY

"B", "C", "D" Flights - support of controlled american sources (CAS) personnel, counterinsurgency activities and transportation. "E" Flight - unconventional warfare, reconnaissance film courier, base defense, SAW training, logistical support of USAF units or U. S. sponsered activities, psychological warfare.

B. SECONDARY (OR OTHER)

"B", "C", "D" Flights - civic action, utility and rescue. "E" Flight - VIP courier, utility and rescue.

SECTION IV — PERSONNEL

STATUS	OFFICERS	AIRMEN	CIVILIANS	TOTAL
ASSIGNED	67	140	2	209
AUTHORIZED	77	109	4	190
ATTACHED		33		33

SECTION V — EQUIPMENT

A. AIRCRAFT
CH3C - 7
UH1F - 13

B. WEAPONS (INCLUDING MISSILES)
6 - 7.62 mini - guns.
6 - 3.75 rocket launchers.
20 - M-60 machine guns.

C. ELECTRONICS
N/A

D. OTHER
N/A

SECRET

7AF FORM 7 (Security Classification - if classified)

1. (U) During this quarter Lieutenant Colonel John M. Steen replaced Lieutenant Colonel John W. Amidon as commander of the 20th Helicopter Squadron (1). The transfer of command took place in October with Lieutenant Colonel Amidon being reassigned to the 703rd PACAF Support Squadron, Shaw AFB, South Carolina (2).

2. (S) "A" Flight which was located at Tan Son Nhut was sent to Udorn RTAFB and three CH3C aircraft were transferred to the 21st Helicopter Squadron located at Nakhom Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. Four aircraft were scheduled for transfer, but the transfer of one aircraft was delayed due to the fact that aircraft 691 required extensive repair. In addition, fifteen personnel were transferred to the 21st Helicopter Squadron; 9 pilots and 6 maintenance people (10).

3. (S) On 8 November, "E" Flight assumed the former mission of "A" Flight which is the 6470th Reconnaissance Squadron Courier and a secondary mission of VIP, utility and rescue. Therefore, the present mission of "E" Flight is Unconventional Warfare, Reconnaissance Film Courier, Base Defense, SAW Training, Logistical Support of U. S. A. F. units or U. S. sponsered activities (DASC Alpha, Special Forces-Recondo, Market Time, ROK Forces), Psychological Warfare and Transportation of VIP's (3). "E" Flight's primary operation remains highly classified.

4. (S) The primary operation of Bravo, Charlie and Delta Flight was continuation of the support of USAF OPERATIONS and controlled american sources (CAS). As noted in the September 1967 report the 20th Helicopter Squadron was relieved of the SAR effort and no support was requested or provided during this period (10).

5. (S) During this reporting period the Pony Express flew 392 sorties for a total of 417.8 hours of flying time. 1452 passengers were carried and 121, 891 pounds of cargo all in supporting the CAS mission (10).

6. (S) In support of USAF Operations despite frequent bad weather 450 sorties were flown for a total of 474.6 hours of flying time. 204 passengers were transported and 445,209 pounds of cargo (10).

7. (S) In December, one Army CH-47 Chinook was deployed to Udorn to provide heavy left capability in support of the USAF mission. This heavy lift capability was provided by the Army CH-47 crew commanded by Captain Squire (10).

8. (U) During October, the failure of the tail rotor drive shaft bearings accounted for the low OR rate. Bearing failures occurred in the viscous damper unit which interconnects the tail rotor drive shaft. Twenty-one of twenty-three failures of the viscous damper was due to bearing failure (10).

9. (S) In October squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours flown	337:05
Sorties flown	329
Passengers carried	584
Cargo carried	133,924 pounds

Eight aircraft assigned/seven operational. One aircraft in IRAN, 582.

Operational ready rate 43.1 %. A/C utilization rate authorized 50.0 hours (10).

10. (S) In November squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours flown	449:10
Sorties flown	385
Passengers carried	857
Cargo carried	220,039 pounds

10 aircraft assigned/8 operational
582 remains in IRAN
691 assigned to RAM Team for cracked transmission mount and extensive bulkhead repair.
Operational Ready rate 63.6%
A/C Utilization rate 64.2 hours per A/C
A/C Utilization rate authorized 50 hours per A/C

11. (S) In December squadron accomplishments at Udorn were:

Hours flown	352:15
Sorties flown	385
Passengers carried	1578
Cargo carried	277,303 pounds

7 aircraft assigned/5 operational
582 remains in IRAN
691 assigned to RAM team for cracked transmission mount and extensive bulkhead repair.
Operational Ready rate 78.8%
A/C Utilization rate 58.7 hours per A/C
A/C Utilization rate authorized 50 hours per A/C

12. (S) One aircraft was out of commission for eight days at L. S. 108 due to a main transmission change. The transmission change was accomplished at LS 108 under difficult field conditions, but our maintenance personnel continue to do an excellent job. In support of this effort 24½ hours were flown transporting men and equipment (10).

13. (S) During the period 27 December through 29 December the squadron was involved in a CAS mission which resulted in two aircraft coming under hostile fire in the landing zone. One aircraft received eleven hits from hostile fire. The details of this operation will be reported in the next report (10).

14. (U) During November and December the 20th Helicopter Squadron at Udorn was involved in an extensive change-over of flying personnel, due to scheduled rotations to the CONUS, and transfer of pilots to the 21st Helicopter Squadron. This change-over of pilots had no adverse effect on the ability of the 20th Helicopter Squadron to accomplish the mission at Udorn (10).

15. (S) "E" Flight has 13 UH1F helicopters which are deployed at Nha Trang, Tan Son Nhut and Ban Me Thout, RVN. From the beginning of the quarter "E" Flight performed its primary mission from Kon Tum, RVN. The biggest problem at Kon Tum was the lack of sufficient gunships to adequately perform the mission requirements and the lack of available parts, both aircraft and armament. On 10 December the unit changed operating locations to Ban Me Thout and the above listed problems still exist (4).

16. (S) To accomplish assigned missions "E" flight helicopters are equipped with six 7.62 mini guns, six 3.75 rocket launchers and twenty M-60 machine guns (4).

17. (S) The availability of UH1F's is still critical, to accomplish assigned missions. It is estimated that fifteen helicopters is a minimum to accomplish the present mission requirements (4).

18. (U) "E" Flight maintenance is authorized four TSgt's seven level, at the time of this report they have five TSgt's three level. The personnel quota is for sixty, but the present manning is fifty-five. As a result of this personnel profile it requires an OJT man and a supervisor to accomplish the same work that should be done by one. This requires personnel that would normally operate in a supervisory capacity away from their normal jobs and requires much more effort to perform the same amount of work (5).

19. (U) Maintenance transportation is also a problem because work areas are located some distance from the flight line and requires maintenance personnel to walk some distance thus losing valuable man-hours. This problem is aggravated by the lack of bus transportation from 2300 hours to 0600 hours daily and as a result of rerouting the bus route to the base (5).

20. (S) Logistical support has been another problem. As an example, for the period 1 October through 12 December 66% of the items ordered were delivered. The resultant back-orders took from 5 days to 90 days (5).

21. (S) During this period a problem has developed because pilots being assigned are not fully qualified in the UH1F. Of the personnel received approximately one-third were fully qualified in the UH1F. Most of the other personnel had attended CCTS at Hurlburt AFB, Florida. The training that had been received was benefical; however, it did not produce the qualifications necessary for our SEA mission. A full report of the training necessary is being prepared. It is recommended that only fully qualified 1025D pilots be assigned to this organization in future levies. Only theather indoctrination will be necessary for those pilots that arrive fully qualified (4).

22. (U) FM transmission problems have developed on the new modified UH1F helicopter, that have installed the RT-622 transceiver and the new collins blade type antenna installation on the roof. On 23 December a test was flown in the Nha Trang area conducted by CMSgt Hurd, head of Avionics for

the 14 FMS, Mr. C. E. "Mike" Smedal, field representative for the Magnavox Company and pilots Major Chester Brown and Lt. Col. R. J. Wickwire. After continued testing and study, a fix was made in the Impedance Matching Assembly (204-075-379), Resistor which produces matching deviation to the RT-622. The value of R-36 was changed to 100 ohms. After frequent radio checks this correction has improved FM radio transmission by a considerable amount. All the UH1F aircraft on station using the RT-622 FM radio are being modified with the new R-36 resistor on an ASAP basis. Therefore, the normal FM tactical frequencies will be available to the pilots on UH1F helicopters (11).

23. (U) On 23 December a message from WRAMA was received which gave specific instructions for changing the wiring in the modified UH1F's equipped with TACAN installation problem and gave proper TACAN magnetic bearing indication on the number 1 needle. Those aircraft rewired are working properly and the rewiring fix is being incorporated on all Lucky Tiger Project aircraft on an ASAP basis (11).

24. (C) The biggest problem during this period was a fifty percent loss in qualified personnel, beginning in late September through the end of November. They were replaced with unqualified personnel that arrived in early November through December. Unless action is taken to increase the inventory of pilots and aircraft the problems will again be encountered in April and May (4).

25. (S) Recommended solutions:

a. SE AOR 56 should increase assigned aircraft to fifteen in February (4).

b. Gun components and equipment when provided will increase gunship capacity (4).

c. Increase the number of unit equipped aircraft to eighteen or more with proficient pilot and gunner manning (4).

Training in a war zone is extremely hazardous and wasteful of assigned aircraft and personnel. The additional mission requirements at Tan Son Nhut has required the use of one aircraft and three qualified pilots for proper coverage. Recommend that the mission at Tan Son Nhut be discontinued or performed by fixed wing aircraft for film runs. Also assign one additional HH 43 to the air rescue detachment at Tan Son Nhut to carry out the VIP requirement (4).

26. (U) As a civic action project the 20th Helicopter Squadron is presently supporting a Leper Colony near Kontum, RVN. Each man in the squadron has written to an organization in the United States asking for material donations. When these items are received they will be given to the Leprosanium. Public works construction and various odd jobs around the colony has also been accomplished. In the future we plan to establish a civic action project near Nha Trang, but at the present time no suitable project has been started in that area (6).

27. (U) On 20 November, five UH1F helicopters from "E" flight were enroute to Kon Tum, RVN. Approximately twelve miles north of Ninh Hoa, RVN, SSgt Bruns stated to Major Livermore that something had fallen from the Army helicopter that was in view. Shortly after the sighting a Mayday was received from Blue Star 750 stating that he had autorotated into an insecure area. Hornet flight turned around and upon their arrival the downed pilot elected to stay with his aircraft. The two gunships went in to provide close fire support and the flight acted as a radio relay for approximately one hour, permitting rescue to be accomplished and the aircraft to be recovered. Thanks was received, over the radio, from Army personnel on the scene (7).

28. (U) Fifty-four Air Medals and seventeen Distinguished Flying Crosses were awarded during this period. Eight DFC's were awarded for one mission. The mission involved two Green Hornet gunships from "E" flight to provide close air support for an army unit engaged with hostile forces. Upon arrival at the scene, they learned that the army unit had been cut in half and was in great danger of being overrun. Forewarned to expect heavy ground fire and despite a very low ceiling, they made repeated firing passes through intense ground fire in a successful attempt to prevent the hostile forces from completely destroying the friendly unit. After expending all their rockets and most of their ammunition they volunteered to mark known unfriendly positions with smoke grenades so that arriving A1E's could expend their ordance without endangering the friendly unit. Their names are listed as follows:

Major Benjamin A. Watson
Captain Royal E. Foster, Jr.
Captain Robert R. Strout
Captain Edward A. Young
SSgt Herbert L. Conner
SSgt Charles W. Elliott
A1C Jerry L. Burchfield
A1C Michael R. Hall (8)

29. (U) UH1F's.

Hours flown - 1725.0
Missions fragged - 742
Sorties flown - 2780
Passengers - 3328
Cargo (tons) - 64,384
Rounds ammunition expended - 240,400 (7.62)
Rockets expended - 303
SAR alert hours - 0
Type Sorties: Armed Helicopters
Infils = 104
Exfils = 127
Visual Recon = 66
Army Base Defense = 21
TAC movement = 257
Type Sorties: Unarmed Helicopters
Infils = 148

Exfils = 221
Visual Recon = 74
Army Support = 420
TAC movement = 327
A. F Support = 548
Med Evac = 5
FCF = 120

Aircraft and aircrew at Ban Me Thout are on 24 hour Ground Alert, 15 Min response. Approximate Ground Alert under this 9,418 hours (12) (13).

30. (U) Effective 1 January 1968 flights "B", "C" and "D" located at Udorn RTAFB will be redesignated Flight "A", "B" and "C". Flight "E" will become flights "D", "E" and "F" on the same date (9).

20th Helicopter Squadron

(U) During the quarter, Lt. Col. John M. Steen replaced Lt. Col. John W. Aminon as commander of the 20th. The change of command took place in October when Colonel Amidon was reassigned to the 703rd PACAF Support Squadron, Shaw AFB, S.C. (22)

(S) During the period, A Flight, which was located at Tan Son Nhut, was sent to Udorn RTAFB and three CH-3C aircraft were transferred to the 21st Helicopter Squadron at Nakhom Phanom RTAFB, Thailand. Four aircraft were scheduled to be transferred, but one was delayed due to extensive repair requirements. In addition, 15 personnel were transferred from the 20th to the 21st Helicopter Squadron; nine pilots and six maintenance people.

(S) On November 8, E Flight at Nha Trang assumed the former mission of A Flight at Tan Son Nhut, which is the 6470th Reconnaissance Squadron courier and a secondary mission of VIP, utility and rescue. Therefore, the present mission of E Flight is unconventional warfare, reconnaissance film courier, base defense, SAW training, logistical support of USAF units or U.S. sponsored activities (DASC Alpha, Special Forces-Recondo, Market Time, ROK Forces), psychological warfare and transportation of VIPs. E Flight's primary operation remains highly classified.

(S) The primary operation of Bravo, Charlie, and Delta Flights was continuation of the support of USAF Operations and controlled American sources (CAS). As noted in the September 1967 report, the 20th Helicopter Squadron was relieved of the SAR effort and no support was requested or provided during the quarter.

(S) One aircraft received 11 hits from hostile fire. Full details on this operation were not available this reporting period. (23)

(U) Eight DFCs were awarded to two Green Hornet crews while supporting an Army unit. The mission involved two gunships from E Flight. Upon arrival at the scene, they learned that the Army unit had been cut in half and was in great danger of being overrun. Forewarned to expect heave ground fire and despite a very low ceiling, the gunships made repeated firing passes through intense ground fire in a successful attempt to prevent the hostile forces from completely destroying the friendly unit. After expending all their rockets and most of their ammunition, they volunteered to mark known unfriendly positions with smoke grenades so that arriving A-1Es could expend their ordnance without endangering the friendly forces.

(U) During the period, UF-1Fs flew 1,726 hours in 712 missions, while transporting 3,338 passengers and firing 241,000 rounds of 7.62 ammunition.

(U) CH-3Cs were in the air 1,246 hours, and transported 3,310 passengers and 237 tons of cargo while flying 1,773 sorties. (24)

(U) E Flight has 13 UH-1F helicopters which are deployed at Nha Trang, Tan Son Nhut and Ban Me Thout, RVN. When the period began, E Flight was performing its primary mission from Kontum. The biggest problem at Kontum was the lack of sufficient gunships to adequately perform the mission requirements and the lack of available parts for both aircraft and armament. On December 10 the unit changed operating locations to Ban Me Thout, but was still faced with the same problems.

(U) To accomplish their assigned missions, E Flight helicopters are equipped with six 7.62 miniguns, six 3.75 rocket launchers and twenty M-60 machine guns.

(U) The biggest problem during this period was 50 percent loss in qualified personnel, beginning in late September through the end of November. They were replaced with unqualified personnel who arrived in early November through December. Unless action is taken to increase the inventory of pilots and aircraft, the problem will again be encountered in April and May.

(S) Two aircraft incidents of notable importance occurred this quarter. One was at Lima Site 108 (LS) when a main transmission change was required. The change was accomplished at LS 108 under difficult field conditions. In support of the effort, 24½ hours were flown transporting men and equipment.

(S) The other occurred during the period December through December 29. At that time the squadron was involved in the CAS mission which resulted in two aircraft coming under hostile fire in a landing zone.

Chapter III - FOOT NOTES

1. Manual, PACAFM 55-3, Vol. II June 15, 1966, On File 14ACW (DCOTUOC), (C)

2. Rpt, Extracted from 'APEX STAT' Rpts, 14ACW Sqs & DETS, On File 14ACW (DCOTUOC), (S)

3. Special Order, G-212, PACAF, Nov. 21, 1967, APPENDIX 2 (U)

4. Hist, 1ACSF, Oct. 1, - Dec 20, 1967. Volume II APPENDIX 5, #II (S)

5. Letter, DCOIS/DCOT to DCO, Subject; Staff visit (1st ACSF), 2 Nov. 67 Volume I, Appendix 4 Doc 5, (S)

6. Rpt. Extracted from 14ACW Dec, STATUS & TRENDS, submitted by 14CSG (BCPT), On File 14ACW (DXI) (U)

7. Hist. 1ACSF, Oct 1 - Dec 20, 1967, Volume II APPENDIX 5, #II

8. IBID

9. Ltr of Appreciation, AL 1st BDE, 4th INF. Div. to Co 1st ACS, Nov 27, 1967, Volume I, APPENDIX IV DOC 3 (U)

10. Hist, 1st ACSF, Oct 1 - Dec 20, 1967 Volume II, APPENDIX 5, #II (S)

11. IBID

12. Ltr, 14 DCO/ to 7AF(DPIR), Subject Installation of M-39 Gun in A-1E/H Aircraft, Volume I, Appendix 4, Doc 6. (C)

13. Hist, 4ACS, Oct 1 - Dec 31, 1967 Volume II, APPENDIX 4, #III (U)

14. Rpt Extracted from 14ACW, Dec STATUS & TRENDS, submitted by 14CSG (BCPT), on file 14ACW (DXI) (U)

15. Hist 4ACS, Oct 1 - Dec 31, 1967, Volume II, APPENDIX 4, #III (U)

16. Rpt Extracted from 14ACW, Dec STATUS & TRENDS, submitted by 14CSG (BCPT), on file 14ACW (DXI) (U)

17. Hist, 5ACS, Oct 1 - Dec 31, 1967, Volume II, APPENDIX 4, #IV (U)

18. IBID

19. Rpt Extracted from 14ACW, Dec STATUS & TRENDS, submitted by 14CSG (BCPT), on file, 14ACW (DXI) (U)

20. Hist, 9ACS, Oct 1 - Dec 31, 1967, Volume II, APPENDIX 4, #V (U)

21. Rpt Extracted from 14ACW, Dec STATUS & TRENDS, submitted by 14CSG (BCPT), on file, 14ACW (DXI) (U)

22. Hist, 20 Helio, Oct 1 - Dec 31, 1967, Volume II, APPENDIX 4, #VI (S)

23. IBID

24. Rpt Extracted from 14ACW, Dec STATUS & TRENDS, submitted by 14CSG (BCPT), on file, 14ACW (DXI) (U)

HOW THE "GREEN HORNETS" OF THE 20TH SPECIAL OPERATIONS SQUADRON FLEW

COVERTLY TO CAMBODIA



THE GENEVA accords of 1954 forbade the US and its SEATO allies to station forces in Laos, and the 1962 Geneva accords reaffirmed the US observance of Laos' and Cambodia's neutrality. However, conflict within Laos brought a marked US response — confining the growing guerilla war inside South Vietnam's borders proved to be an impossible task without conducting operations within neutral regions. Often, these activities erupted into major combat actions which proved difficult to suppress from a watching world. Eventually, President Nixon would admit that the US was, in fact, conducting warfare outside of Vietnam in response to the increased communist use of Laos and Cambodia for bases and supply lines into South Vietnam.

As early as 1958, the South Vietnamese government mounted unconventional warfare forays against the communists as a countermeasure. In 1960, the CIA received authorisation to operate in Laos to strengthen Laotian forces, but these efforts were largely unsuccessful and later that year, members of the Special Forces entered Laos. The CIA received further permission in 1961 to assist the South Vietnamese in conducting covert operations in North Vietnam and Laos — and the South Vietnamese government added Cambodia to these arrangements, for good measure. Also that year, the US Air Force established several bases in northern Thailand, in conjunction with SEATO exercises designed to display a show of force in the region. Sixteen Sikorsky H-34 helicopters were among the materials delivered to these bases, for onward distribution to Laotian forces to help prevent communist domination.

In February 1964, Military Assistance Command — Vietnam (MACV) initiated its Studies and Observations Group (better known as Special Operations Group or SOG) to handle the broad mission of clandestine operations in the denied areas of Laos and Cambodia — and a few months later, such missions into Laos gained President Johnson's approval. The stage was thus set for what would become a vast secret network of highly trained teams which penetrated Laos, Cambodia (after early 1970), and even North Vietnam. These projects, undertaken by SF under the MACV-SOG umbrella, were primarily for reconnaissance, but also included POW rescue, downed aircrew recovery, assassinations, bomb damage assessment (BDA), prisoner snatches, sabotage and tapping enemy communications. Missions were often launched from FOBs (Forward Operating Bases) in Vietnam and US air bases in Thailand.

Air support for SOG operations initially took the form of VNAF H-34s, US Army UH-1s and USAF fixed-wing aircraft. Air transport in Laos was accomplished by civilian contract, mainly the CIA air arm known as Air America. Later in the war, USAF helicopters regularly flew missions in Laos to augment Air America and the often inadequate helicopter forces of the Laotian government. In most SOG operations,

(Heading photo) A Bell UH-1F of the 20th Special Operations Squadron near Tan Son Nhut Air Base, Vietnam, in September 1968. (Below) Another 1968 photo of a 20th SOS UH-1F.



The Vietnam war continues to provide aviation historians with a variety of highly interesting accounts of the many units that operated covertly throughout the conflict. Noteworthy among them was the 20th Special Operations Squadron (SOS), also known as the "Green Hornets", which had the distinction of being the only combat helicopter squadron in the US Air Force. Officially released versions of the Green Hornets' history claim that the unit engaged in classified psychological warfare (psywar) operations. Relying upon available references and the personal accounts of participants, Wayne Mutza shows that this was not quite the truth. In reality, the 20th SOS served mainly as the exclusive air arm of Special Forces (SF, "Green Berets") units that conducted surreptitious operations inside the borders of nations declared off limits by virtue of neutrality.



This Bell UH-1P (65-7935) has a universal mount for its cabin gun but without the dust shield on the outer face. The Sagami mount is hinge-fitted to the forward end of the universal mount. The boom marking includes a Mexican character "swatting" the hornet. (Photo via Bob Chenoweth.)

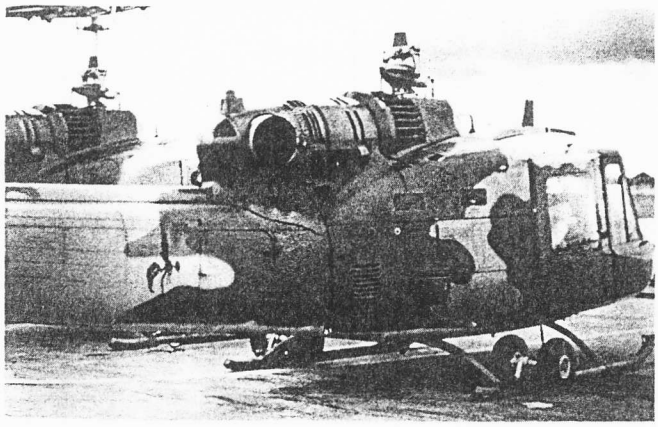
helicopters proved superior to fixed-wing transports, pushing the transport helicopter to the forefront in the special air warfare scenario.

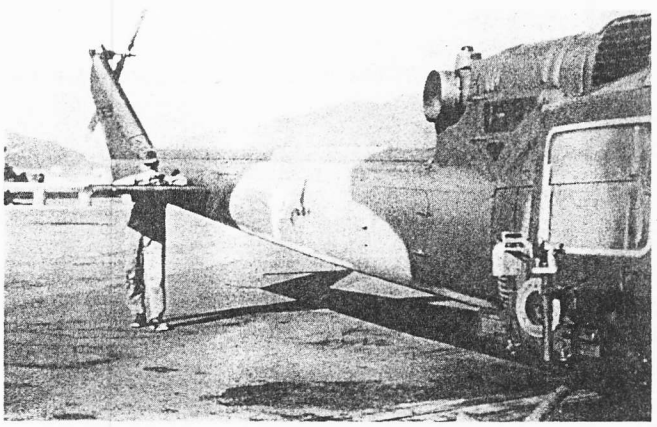
Organisation and background

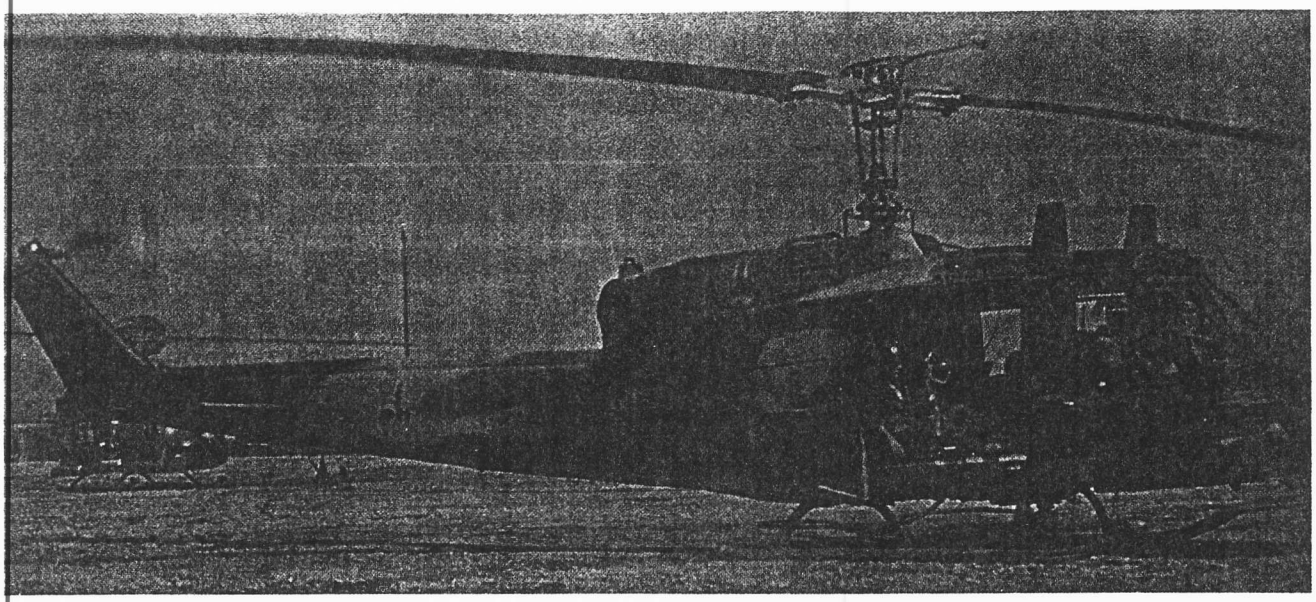
The Air Force had recognised the helicopter's worth during the 'fifties, when it formed a transport helicopter force. Disbanded in 1956 when deemed unnecessary, this force gave way to helicopter airlift provided by ground forces. It wasn't until 1962 that the Air Force again displayed an inclination towards possessing an autonomous transport helicopter capability. This recommendation, based on the worsening situation in Vietnam, stemmed from the formation of a counter-insurgency (COIN) force trained specifically for night penetrations and support of SF and friendly guerillas in South East Asia. Designated the 4400th Combat Crew Training Squadron (CCTS), and nicknamed "Jungle Jim", the unit was replaced by the Special Air Warfare Center (SAWC) in April 1962, which became responsible for training the "Air Commandos". The SAWC yielded the 606th Air Commando Squadron (ACS), which was sent to Nakhon Phanom (NKP) Air Base in Thailand in 1966. This was a composite unit designed to augment and train the Thais in COIN activities, although little training was actually done. Among the unit's aircraft inventory were a number of new Bell UH-1F "Huey" helicopters which performed a variety of missions in Thailand and Laos, including civil action and support of the Thai Army and Border Patrol Police. Some cargo swapping and a few extra marks on the map enabled the helicopters to trade missions with Air America — crews in civilian clothing often flying "sterile" missions into Laos. The US, convinced that reports and some radar tracks of unidentified aircraft over Thailand indicated the presence of North Vietnamese intruders, beefed up its night intercept capabilities, using 606th helicopters as training targets. While in Thailand, the Huey pilots heard reports of communist helicopters resupplying troops in northern Thailand at night without lights. One exuberant Huey pilot wanted to intercept them and then to fly alongside and shoot them down or fly above them and drop chains into their rotors!

When the US government decided that the Thais should handle their own security duties, the 606th Hueys were transferred to Vietnam in June 1967, where they joined the Sikorsky CH-3Cs, dubbed "Big Charlies", of the 20th Helicopter Squadron at Tan Son Nhut Air Base. Established on 8 October 1965, the 20th Helicopter Squadron used 14 CH-3Cs for artillery support, medevac and recovery of downed light aircraft. Two of these aircraft were moved to NKP in

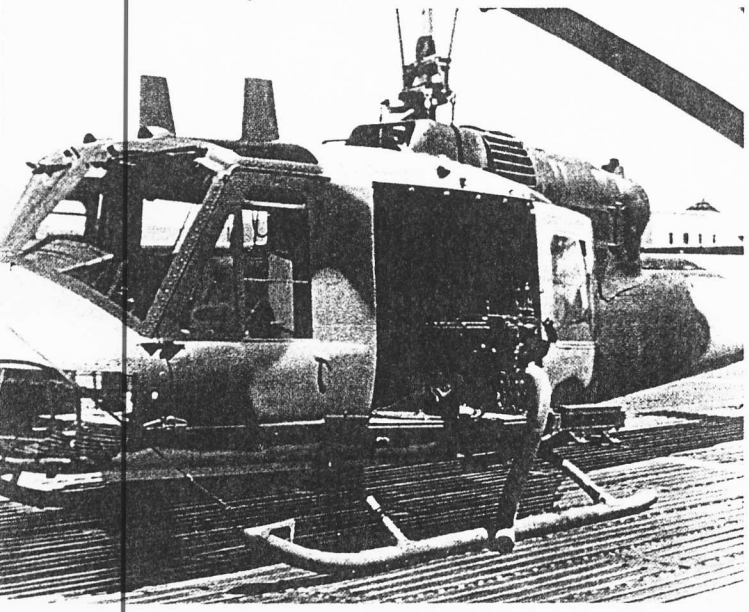
(Below left) A 1969 photo at Binh Thuy shows the extensively reworked engine exhaust area of a UH-1F. Notice the screened engine air inlets and baggage compartment. The "Green Hornet" in this case is black, and the warning arrow to the engine exhaust is red. (Below right) A close-up of the UH-1P '935 showing the XM-156 universal mount with MA 4A bomb rack and M60 machine gun on the swing-out Sagami mount.







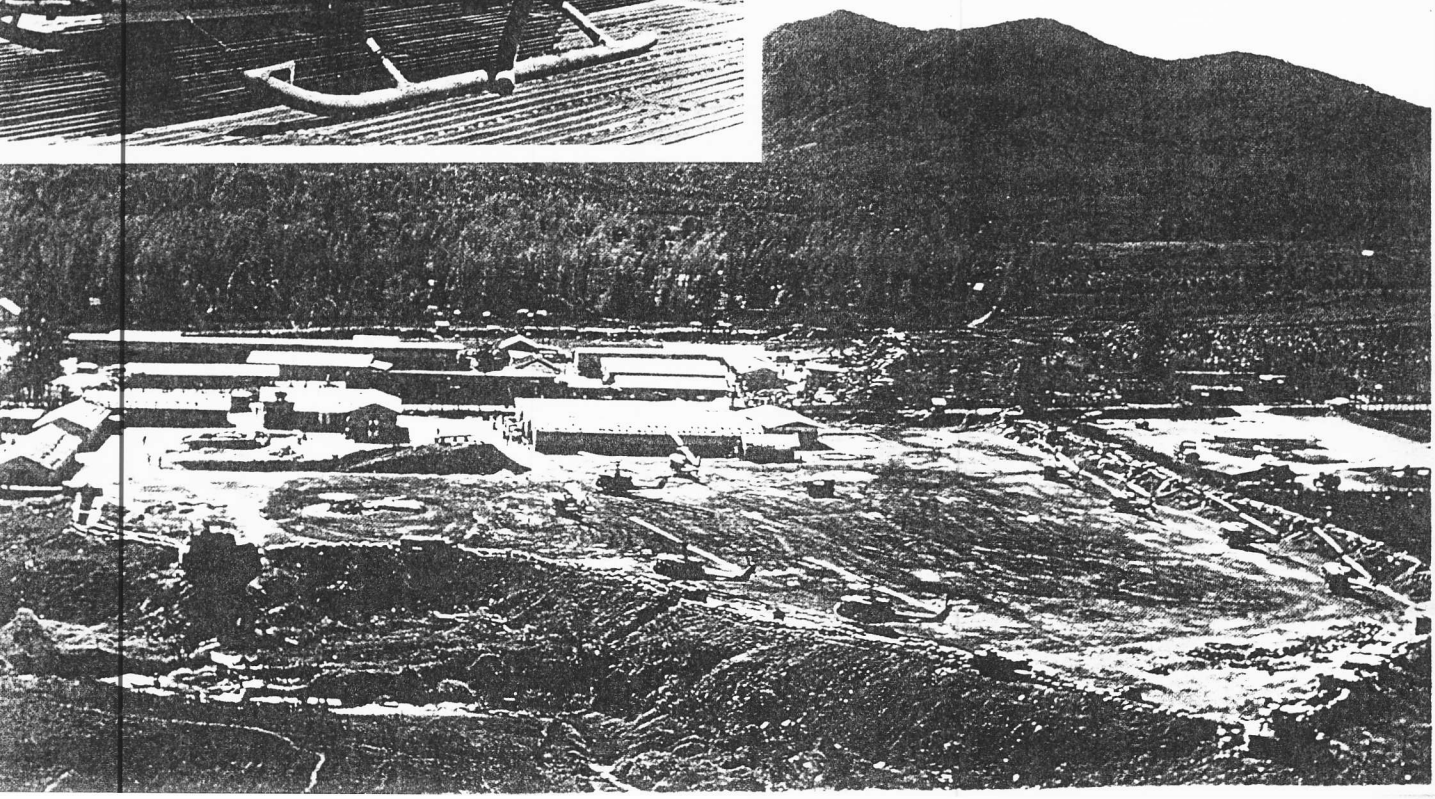
(Above) A "slick" UH-1F refuelling at Ban Me Thuot in March 1968. (Photo Bob Steinbrunn.) (Below) UH-1P at Tuy Hoa in August 1970, with mini-guns fixed to fire forwards, under control of the pilot. Notice the armoured pilot seat and twin UHF/VHF antennae. (Gene Cole.)

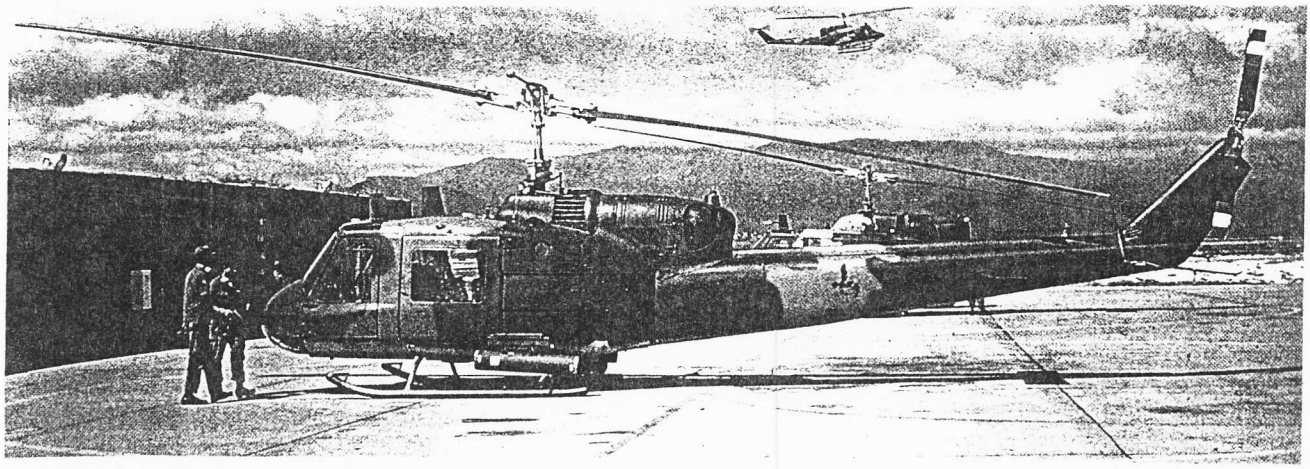


February 1966, where they formed the "Pony Express" detachment conducting covert missions in Laos and Thailand. In June, the 20th transferred to Nha Trang, where its rôle in unconventional warfare gained momentum after a brief training period and link-up with SF. Possibly the reason behind the UH-1 move to Vietnam was that the Air Force contributed nothing and the Army therefore wanted and expected to have all the available UH-1s.

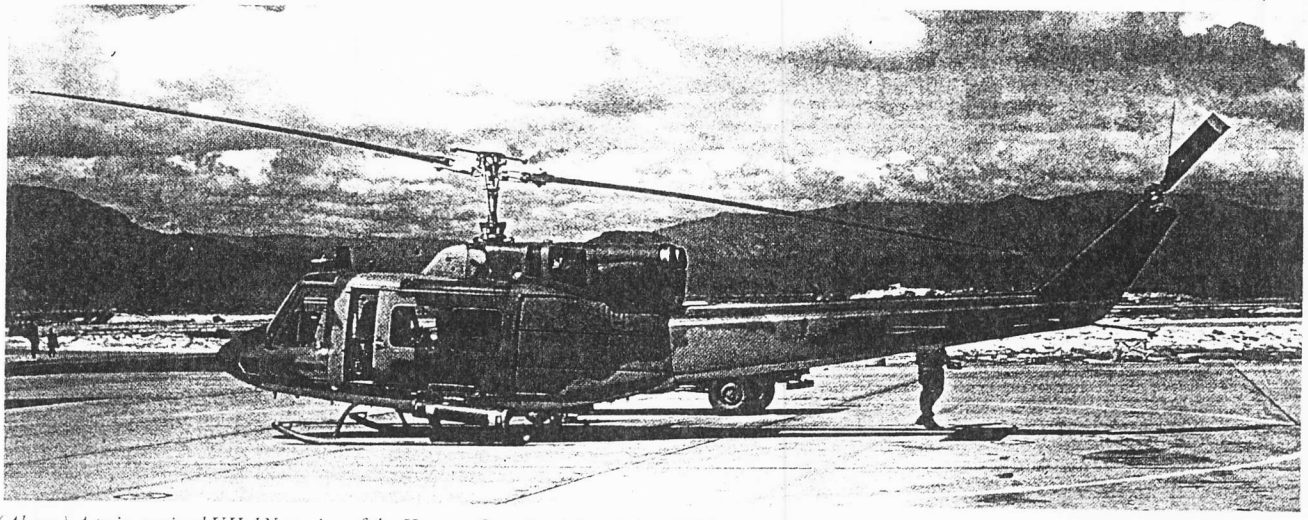
Also located at Nha Trang was the parent unit, the 14th Air Commando Wing, which comprised 12 special operations squadrons, of which only the 20th used helicopters. UH-1 strength was brought up to 15 aircraft in June 1967 and a segment of the unit was re-established at Udorn Air Base in Thailand in May 1968 with several UH-1s from the parent unit soon added.

(Below) The Kontum Forward Operating Base (FOB) in March 1968. This was a primary launching base for Special Forces teams operating into Laos and Cambodia. The nine Hueys visible were from the 189th AHC, on rotational duty to assist cross-border operation. (Photo Bob Steinbrunn.)



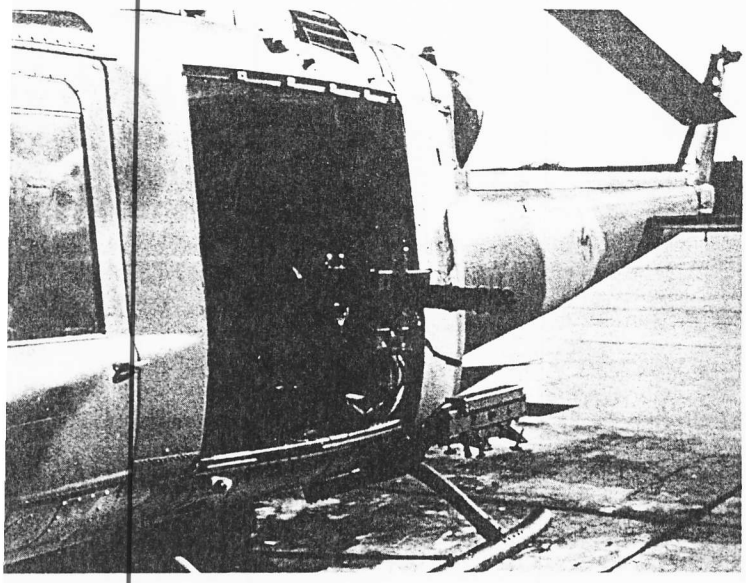


During a maintenance overhaul, the UH-1P serial 63-13163 was repainted in the USAF's standard SEA camouflage scheme, but with the darker shade of green omitted. It is seen here at Cam Ranh Bay in 1971 — compare with the regular three-tone scheme shown below. (Photo Tom Hansen.)



(Above) A twin-engined UH-1N version of the Huey at Cam Ranh Bay in late 1971, carrying LAU-59/B rocket pods, with mini-guns stowed in the cargo cabin. (Photo Tom Hansen.) (Below) An SOG team leaves a "Green Hornet" UH-1N after a mission. This aircraft is equipped with the XM-23 system which utilises M60D machine guns on pintle post mounts. (Photo via Bob Chenoweth.)

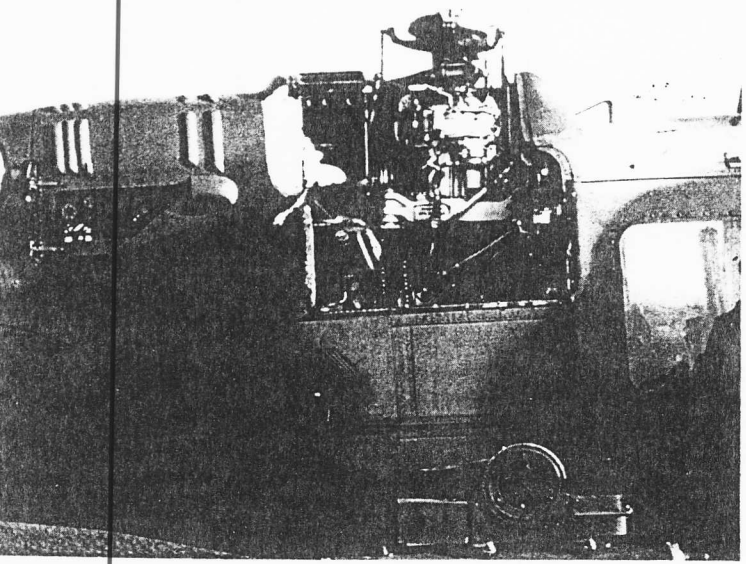




(Above) One of the "Green Hornet" UH-1Ps in February 1971 with the GAU-2B/A mini-guns and later style bomb racks. (Photo Jim Ball.) (Below) One of the original 20th SOS pilots, Maj Tom Garcia (lower left) with a typical SOG team (four indigenous Vietnamese and two US personnel) alongside a "slick" UH-1F. Rope ladders and body armour plates are visible on the cabin floor, and the infantry-type M60s fastened in the doorway have metal rods attached to the barrels to prevent them being fired into the aircraft. (Photo Tom Garcia.)



(Below) A Bell UH-1P with transmission cowling removed, showing a seven-shot LAU-59/A rocket pod suspended on an XM-156 mount. Barely visible is the 0·30-in (7,62-mm) mini-gun stowed in the cabin. (Photo Bob Chenoweth.)



Throughout its lifetime in SEA, the 20th SOS was frequently segmented into detachments which operated from locations such as Kontum and Ban Me Thuot, thereby making it difficult to ascertain exact dates that aircraft operated from certain areas. For some time, the Huey section of the 20th was called "E Flight". On 1 August 1968, the 20th Helicopter Squadron was renamed the 20th Special Operations Squadron, concurrent with the 14th ACW redesignation to 14th Special Operations Wing (SOW). The 20th was relocated to Tuy Hoa AB on 5 September 1969 while the 14th SOW moved to Phan Rang AB. In September 1970 the "Green Hornets" made a final move, this time to Cam Ranh Bay, where the unit remained until de-activation in March 1972.

Some of the pilots who were tasked for duty with the 606th ACS at NKP, Thailand, for six months, volunteered to go with the unit to Vietnam. The original six of these were sent to Nha Trang in spring 1966, while vacancies were filled with Thai-based CH-3 pilots whose lack of Huey experience sometimes compromised high risk missions. The UH-1 pilots were highly experienced, having flown UH-1Fs at missile bases in the US. The 20th SOS lost its first pilot KIA (killed in action) in the first few weeks of operations, on 31 March 1967.

In December 1967, a second Sikorsky unit, the 21st Helicopter Squadron, using the improved CH-3E, set up shop at NKP, from where it placed seismic sensors, conducted roadwatch infiltrations, and later launched team insertions for MACV-SOG. In the summer of 1969, the "Pony Express" CH-3s were absorbed into the 21st, while the UH-1s assigned to the unit joined the others with the 20th in Vietnam.

Missions of the 20th SOS

After the first helicopter infiltration in May 1965, SOG rapidly expanded its area of operations during 1966 and '67 — so far, in fact, that the reconnaissance teams soon could no longer use their maps showing borders deliberately positioned farther west. By 1967, nearly 300 patrols had been launched into Laos, as well as more than 80 larger forces to "exploit" targets uncovered by the reconnaissance teams. Early that year, MACV overrode the US government policy of not violating Cambodia's neutrality and began missions across its border. Intelligence gathering "across the fence" remained of paramount importance and soon became standard procedure.

Initially, the "Green Hornets" helicopters were pressed into service, along with VNAF H-34s of the 219th Helicopter Squadron and Army UH-1s, as troop carriers and gunships for reconnaissance teams. The 20th SOS quickly adapted to its new COIN rôle and soon became the preferred support unit for SF operations across the borders. Rapport between the two was keen, mainly because of the high risk of operations, which required precision teamwork and speed. During the greater part of its career, the speciality and primary mission of the 20th SOS was infiltration and exfiltration of SF teams in an operational area in Laos known as "Prairie Fire", which covered the vast Ho Chi Minh Trail network. Missions into Cambodia were called "Daniel Boone". All personnel involved in missions functioned "sterile", meaning that gear, weapons, clothing and even the helicopters, in the event of capture, could not be linked to US origins, lest an international incident were created with evidence of warfare being conducted beyond neutral boundaries. "Black" became a byword, used in reference to mission details; "black" missions were supported by unmarked aircraft called "Blackbirds", etc. Although Washington tacitly approved, the mounting of such missions was publicly denied by the US and South Vietnamese governments. To this day, the dilemma of POW/MIAs in Laos remains a sensitive issue.

The first SOG teams in Laos quickly wore thin the element of surprise. As missions escalated in number and strength, the teams often became the prey in deadly manhunts. Missions were assigned by MACV-SOG and usually were flown by four



The UH-1P shown in close-up at the foot of the opposite page is here seen receiving further attention from a ground crewman. The rocket pod, stowed mini-gun and dual UHF/VHF antenna are all visible. (Photo via Bob Chenoweth.)

gunships, a command aircraft, a rescue aircraft and the reconnaissance team transport. Later, smaller flights of four UH-1s were used, and these always worked in pairs to cover one another. On an intelligence mission, the idea was to insert the team as unobtrusively as possible, have them do the work and get out again in one piece. Initiating, encouraging, or in any way provoking contact with the enemy was a bad idea, since the odds heavily favoured the enemy. Getting the teams in was relatively easy, as there was time for careful planning and aerial reconnaissance of the LZ (landing zone). Usually consisting of two Americans and four indigenous troops, the teams spent a maximum of five days in the jungle. While on patrol, they had an aptitude for attracting trouble and the extraction often became a big production. Once the team was "in", it was standard procedure for the same helicopters to stand by at the nearest base for the extraction. An FAC (Forward Air Controller) usually worked the mission and, if necessary, could muster up heavy air support to cover a pick-up.

"Green Hornets" flew in loose formation, with the gunships providing cover. To mask an insertion, they touched down in several locations, with only one aircraft depositing a team. Another technique was to have a flight in trail formation flying low over the LZ — the lead Huey then dropped down to

UH-1P 63-13163 enjoys the relative luxury of a hardened apron. As other photos show, the Hueys often operated from unprepared surfaces and were habitually maintained under open skies. (Photo via Bob Chenoweth.)





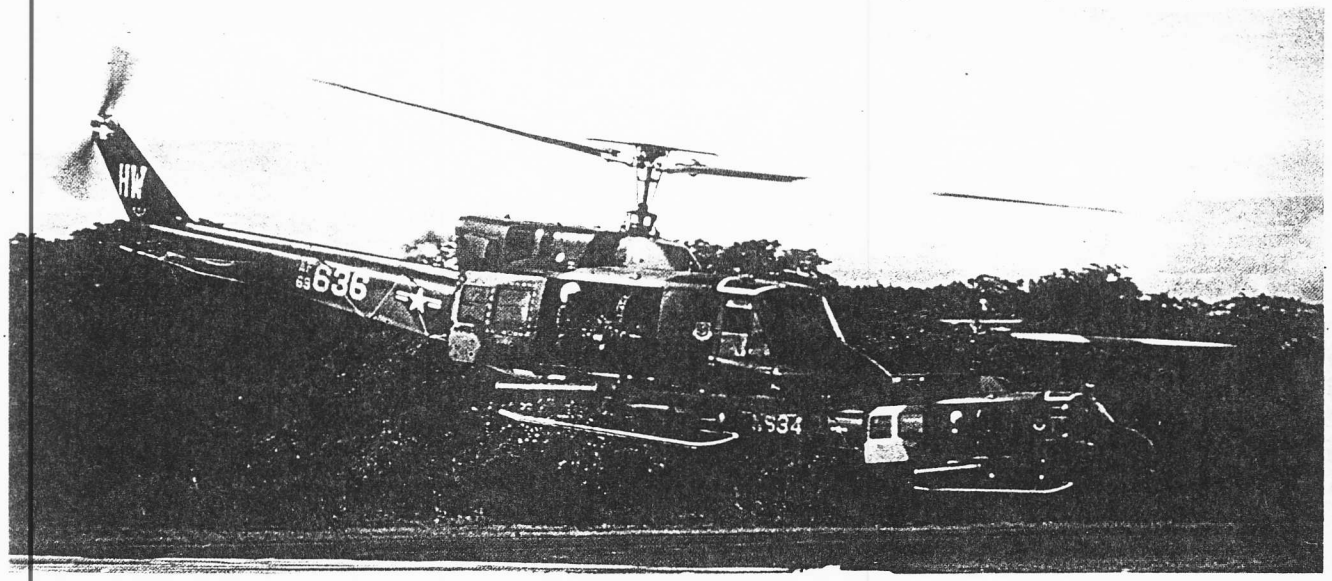
A UH-1N operating at Cam Ranh Bay in 1971 reveals flat armour plating installed in the chin bubble. (Photo Tom Hansen.)

deposit the team while the others flew slowly overhead. As they passed, the insertion aircraft lifted to rejoin the procession at the rear, giving the impression that the flight had not altered its pattern. Secrecy was not essential on withdrawals, so the gunships orbited the LZ to attract and suppress enemy fire. Rarely was an LZ large enough for the helicopter to land for the pick-up. The alternative second choice method was to hover between 10 and 15 ft (3-4,6 m) and drop rope ladders. The method most often used involved the "McGuire Rig", which allowed the helicopter to pluck the men out of the jungle. It consisted of triple ropes, each with trapeze wrist locks, or fastened to the soldier's "Stabo Harness". The troops dangled 120 ft (37 m) below the aircraft, their hands free for firing weapons. Night infiltration and pick-up missions were extremely dangerous and performed only in emergencies, when possible aided by flareships.

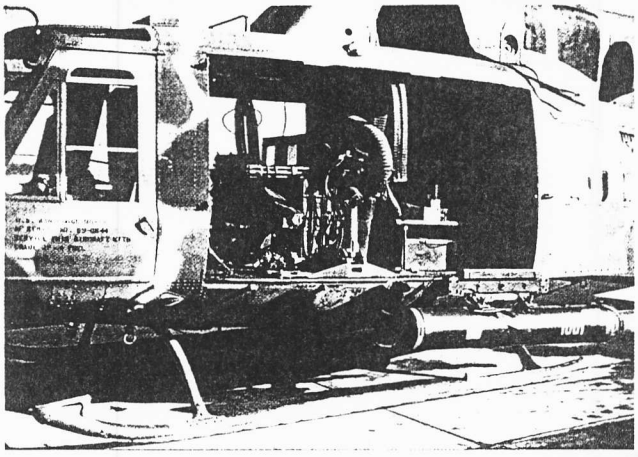
High drama was often prevalent during the "Green Hornets" tenure in SEA. The mettle inherent in the 20th SOS crews was typified by the actions of 1st Lt James P Fleming on 26 November 1965, when he rescued a seven-man team under withering enemy fire. One gunship was shot down in the mêlée and Fleming was awarded the Medal of Honor. The next day his wingman was shot down, but Fleming and his crew rescued the occupants, earning him the Air Force Cross. Fleming had flown his combat qualification check ride only 12 days before the mission.

On 2 April 1968, SF MSGT Roy Benavidez jumped aboard a "Green Hornet" Huey preparing to depart on a mission to rescue a reconnaissance team pinned down near Loc Ninh. The first Huey was shot down attempting the pick-up and another was successful but not before a pilot and co-pilot were killed. Benavidez, who was severely wounded, was awarded the Medal of Honor for his actions. During a mission on 19 February 1968, a UH-1F was shot down attempting a team rescue. SF SSGT Fred W Zabitosky, though badly wounded, rescued the co-pilot, earning him the Medal of Honor. Because of the very nature of its exploits, the 20th SOS lost 19 Hueys in SEA, 13 of them shot down. One was lost north of Nha Trang when it was hit in flight by a 105-mm round. Five aboard were killed, reportedly including the squadron commander and a

These UH-1Ns are shown operating with the 24th Composite Wing (eventual successor to the 20th SOS) at Howard AFB in the Canal Zone. They have high-visibility markings and XM-94 20-mm grenade launchers mated with LAU-59/B rocket pods on the hardpoints. (USAF photo.)



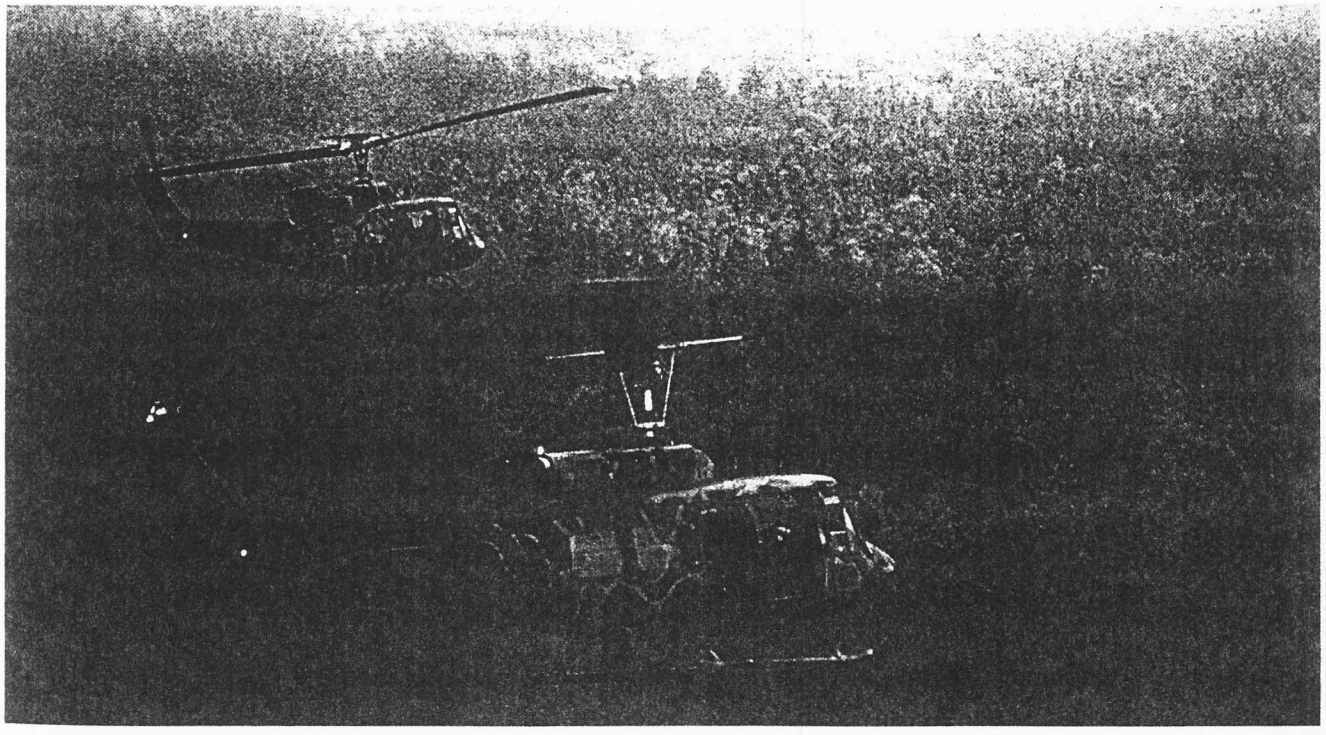




(Above) A 1982 illustration of a UH-1N of the 20th SOS at Hurlburt Field, Florida, showing an unusual mottled colour scheme resulting from the application of a three-tone camouflage over light grey. Stencil-type national insignia are in black. (Right) LAU-59/B rocket pods on the UH-1N, 10 in (25,4 cm) longer than the LAU-59/A version. (Below) A pair of UH-1Ns over Hurlburt in May 1983. (USAF photos.)

civilian technical representative from Bell Helicopter. Five helicopters were lost (four by enemy fire) during 1967-68 alone, and the unit fell upon even harder times when five aircraft were lost to enemy fire during the first four months of 1969, an undisclosed number of crewmen being killed or wounded.

Cross-border operations peaked in 1969 and early 1970, but further losses and maintenance problems forced an end to such work. Missions ended on 1 July 1970, when the political decision was made to cease US troop lifts into Cambodia. The "Green Hornets" continued gunship support for the VNAF H-34s and occasionally made emergency pick-ups. During the



summer of 1971, several troop carrier flights of eight aircraft were made from Kontum to DaNang. During 1972, US helicopters flew only occasional infiltration missions and only on special request. In the second half of 1968 alone, 20th SOS members earned numerous awards for heroism, including six Silver Stars and 11 Purple Hearts. During 1967-68, six crewmen earned the Air Force Cross, and the squadron earned the Presidential Unit Citation in 1967 and multiple Air Force Outstanding Unit Awards.

The Air Force Huey

The mount of the "Green Hornets" was the Bell UH-1 series "Huey" helicopter (officially, the Iroquois), which had been selected by the Air Force in 1963 for missile site support duties. Designated the UH-1F (originally H-48 in the USAF designation system), and based on the Bell Model 204B, the aircraft was built to accept the GE T58-GE-3 engine already in use in USAF Sikorsky CH-3 helicopters, replacing the Lycoming turboshaft in Army versions of the UH-1. The driveshaft of the T58 ran aft, necessitating several engineering changes to be made. The engine was mounted backwards, allowing the driveshaft to fit into the transmission with the exhaust rerouted to the fuselage right side. The GE engine was unreliable but very powerful, requiring the installation of a step-down gearbox to decrease rpm. Indicative of the T58's power was an airlift by a 606th ACS UH-1F of 34 Thai flood victims, plus the crew of three! This standing record was achieved with the pilot performing an apparently routine lift-off. The powerful T58 permitted a favourite stunt performed by 20th SOS pilots, which was to lift straight up to 200 ft (61 m) and dive forward into a take-off attitude. UH-1Fs originally featured the open bell-mouth shaped engine air inlet; however, for use in SEA, this was changed to a set of removable screened air inlet filter sections. Like the 204B, the F model Huey had a 2-ft (61-cm) tail boom extension, permitting the installation of a baggage compartment. This compartment was inconveniently located directly below the exhaust outlet, because Bell fitted it before the Air Force decided which engine to use. The 1,272 shp (951 kW) power plant drove a 48-ft (14,6-m) main rotor with 21-in (53-cm) chord, enabling a gross weight of 9,000 lb (4 082 kg) to be used. UH-1F deliveries totalled 120 aircraft through 1967, with follow-on versions designated the TH-1F built during 1967 for instrument and rescue training.

The Air Force wasted no time in sending its UH-1Fs to SEA, the first Hueys serving with the 606th ACS in Thailand in 1966. The exact number of Air Force Hueys used in SEA is unknown, but reliable sources and photographic evidence indicate about 20 to 25 aircraft. A typical crew comprised a pilot, co-pilot and two gunners who doubled as crew chiefs. Air Force UH-1s in SEA wore the typical USAF tri-tone paint scheme with light grey undersides, but during maintenance overhauls, some Hueys were repainted with only the lighter shade of green. Markings were limited to simply a flat black serial number on the tail fin — standard practice having the last three digits of this number applied to the nose panel, also in flat black. Located on each side of the tail boom was a large stencilled hornet, usually in green and facing forwards, but at times black or facing to the rear. While the unit was at Tuy Hoa, the hornet began to appear everywhere, including on aircraft from other units. Personal markings were used on the Hueys, though not in abundance. On rare occasions, the USAF Hueys were observed in SEA with a small national insignia on the forward tail boom.

To fulfil the two-fold mission of transport and gun support, some UH-1Fs were modified shortly after the "Green Hornets" began operations in Vietnam. These helicopters were fitted with hardpoints, armour and crew-operated weapons. Eventually, some 20 aircraft were so modified and redesignated UH-1Ps. The standard weapons load on the "P" model comprised a pair of LAU-59/A (XM-157A) 2·75-in (70-cm) seven-shot rocket pods and two hand-operated GAU-2B/A (XM-93) 0·30-in (7,62-mm) pintle-mounted mini-guns. These gun systems were located in each cargo doorway and could be fixed forward for firing by the pilot. Their rate of fire was adjustable at either 2,000 or 4,000 rounds per minute. They could also be pivoted to a stowed position inside the aircraft. Fastened to each gun was a flex chute through which expended brass was diverted down and away from the aircraft. Some of the 20th SOS Hueys had the mini-guns fitted right from the start of operations. The rocket pods were attached to universal mounts on the aft hardpoints. Initially, the mounts used were the XM-156 type, familiar on Army Huey gunships, but these were later replaced in favour of a more compact mount of the type seen on US Marine Corps' Hueys.

UH-1Fs used as team transports were called "slicks", a term originated by Army Huey crews in Vietnam to describe a UH-1 lacking heavy armament systems. The UH-1F and P designations were used interchangeably within the unit as the number of Hueys modified with hardpoints increased. During the early years of operations, a number of 20th SOS Hueys also featured a Sagami mount, which incorporated a standard infantry model M60 machine gun affixed to a swing-out post arrangement. The Sagami was used on gunships as well as "slicks", but most of the latter featured M60s suspended from "bungee" cords in the cabin doorway. Fastened to the weapon's barrel was a long metal rod which prevented an over-zealous gunner from accidentally shooting into the aircraft. The guns were also fastened from below with a strap and were belt-fed through flexible ammunition chutes attached to containers fastened to the cabin floor.

SEA avionics were installed in the 20th SOS Hueys and many aircraft were seen with two VHF/UHF antennae on the cabin roof. All "Green Hornet" Hueys retained their cargo hooks, although these were rarely used. Passenger seats were not installed for the reconnaissance team missions — instead, crews frequently fastened lawn chairs to the cabin floor! In Vietnam, crews quickly adopted the practice of placing ceramic body armour plates in the nose "chin bubble" windows — gunners usually sat on them in the cargo area. While based in Thailand, the UH-1Fs also often displayed a placard in a bracket on the doorpost located between the pilot and cabin doors. The information on the placard depended on the cover story being used to explain a particular mission. Some titles used were "USAF, Thai Army, Lao Government", and even "Department of Health"!

At times, the 20th SOS was called upon to test new equipment. One example was a large infra-red searchlight tested while the UH-1s were part of the 606th ACS in Thailand. Later, in Vietnam, the unit tested a personnel detector, known as a "people sniffer", which detected chemical scents emitted by humans. Neither system was adopted for use by the unit. While at Nha Trang, two gunships flew "Firefly" missions over Binh Thuy for a time, but it's doubtful that they were fitted with searchlight equipment.

Twin Hueys arrive

In a move by the Air Force to upgrade its Hueys, the UH-1s of the 20th were gradually replaced by UH-1Ns after the unit moved to Cam Ranh Bay in late 1970. The UH-1N was well suited to the "Green Hornet" missions, having a greater payload capacity and twin engine safety. Initially developed by Bell for the Canadian Armed Forces, the twin-Huey was purchased simultaneously by the USAF and USN. Air Force N-model deliveries began in 1970, eventually totalling 79 aircraft. Power was supplied by two Pratt & Whitney PT6T-3 turbine engines having a total output of 1,800 shp (1 343 kW); the military engine designation was T400-CP-400. Maximum gross weight of the UH-1N was 10,000 lb (4 540 kg), maximum speed was 142 mph (228 km/h) and the maximum range at mission gross weight was 260 miles (418 km). The normal

passenger load was 14 plus pilot and 220 US gal (833 l) of fuel. Like their predecessors, the twin-engined Hueys of the 20th SOS were fitted with weapons systems — all gunship versions having GAU-2B/A and LAU-59/A weapons. In lieu of the mini-guns, the Ns could carry XM-94 rapid-fire 40-mm hand-operated grenade launchers. Installation, operation, and applicable systems paralleled those of the mini-guns. This system had an 800-round capacity, an effective range of 4,900 ft (1,500 m) and could fire 400 rpm. Often, a mini-gun was mounted in the left door and the 40-mm weapons in the right. The UH-1Ns arrived in Vietnam with flat black USAF titles and serial numbers on the tail fin, and standard camouflage, but the "USAF" and data block on the pilot's door were quickly oversprayed with flat black, and the hornet insignia added to the tail boom.

End of an era

Many lessons were learned from the SOG operations of the Vietnam war era. The full potential of these exploits was never realised, because of the inhibitions imposed by the US observance of the Geneva accords. America also feared that expanding the war into Laos and Cambodia would further involve North Vietnam or even China. Many of those lessons learned are formed into the doctrine of today's modern Special Operations Force (SOF).

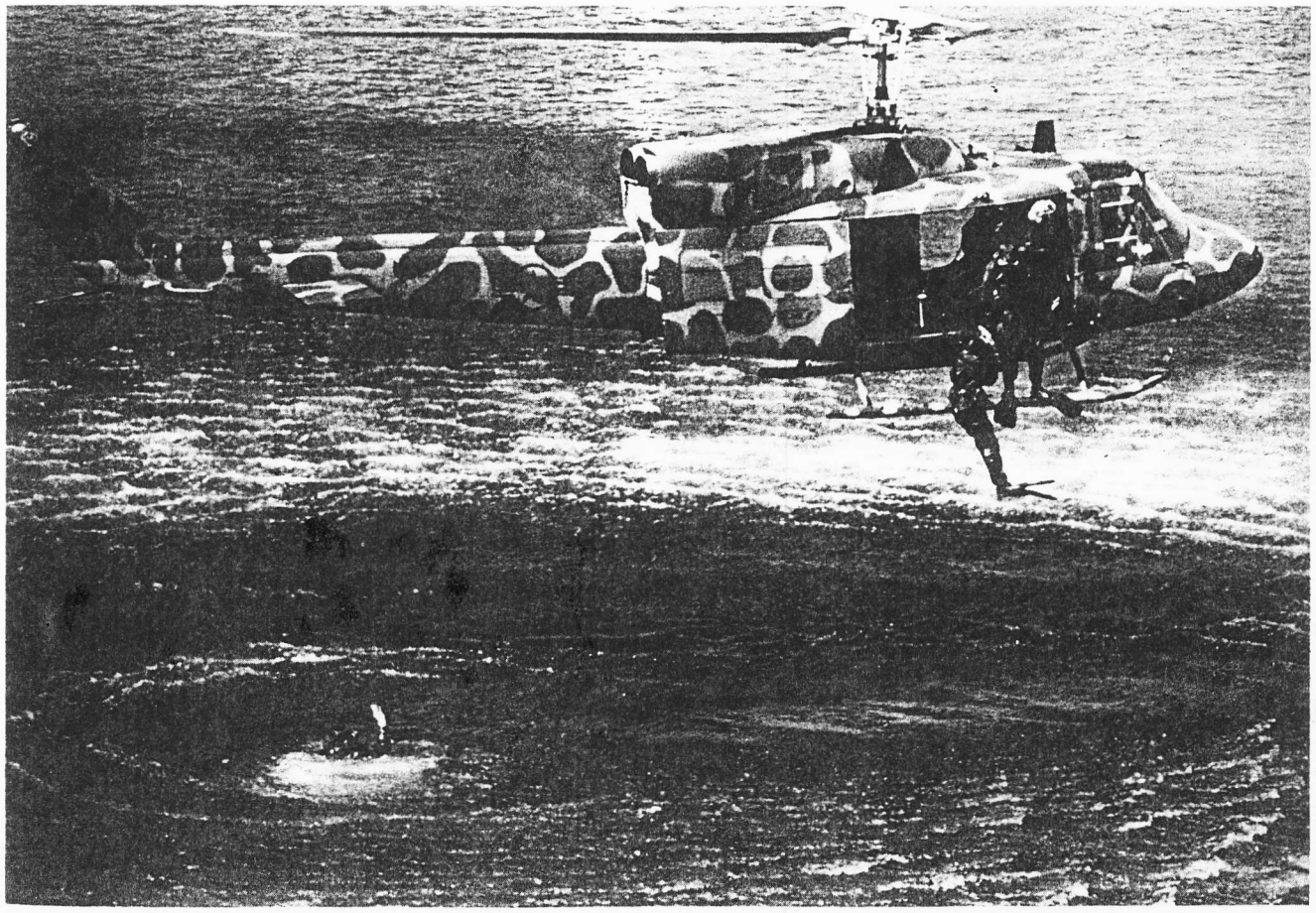
From the end of the war until 1983, the 20th SOS continued to function at Hurlburt Field, Florida, as part of the 1st SOW of the Tactical Air Command (TAC). Aircraft used were the UH-1F, P, and N variants and CH-3Es, with the tail code "AO" carried in white on the tail fin, the serial number added on the tail boom in white, and small national insignia applied to the fuselage roof and belly, as well as the forward end of each tail boom side. Eventually, the older Hueys were phased out in favour of the twin-engined models and HH-53Cs replaced the CH-3s. Many of the older Hueys and CH-3s equipped reserve SOS units.

Today, Special Operations exists on a large scale, encompassing a mix of Air Force active, Reserve and Guard units flying a wide variety of special aircraft. Through a major reorganisation in March 1983, the 2nd Air Division was reactivated, becoming the focal point for all Air Force special operations activities. Through this reorganisation, the 20th SOS officially drew to a close its proud status as the only combat helicopter squadron in the Air Force. Its UH-1Ns were absorbed primarily into the 24th Composite Wing at Howard AFB in Panama. Besides this unit, other principal units of the 2nd Air Division include the 1st SOW, the USAF Special Operations School, and three squadrons at Hurlburt Field, two squadrons in the Philippines and one in Germany. Special emphasis is placed on unconventional warfare, using unique aircraft with special capabilities. In contrast to the days of Vietnam, a good proportion of helicopter missions are flown low level at night with night vision devices.

In an effort to upgrade the SOF to keep pace with the likelihood of low intensity conflict, the Army and Air Force signed an agreement on 22 May 1984 as an AirLand accord. The agreement provided that the Air Force transferred responsibility for providing helicopter support for SOF to the Army — this including about 100 Air Force helicopters dedicated to that mission. The changeover, occurring in July 1986, ended what proved to be a truly unique and colourful chapter in Air Force history. □

The author would like to thank the following for their contributions to this article: Dave Delisio, Tom Garcia, Craig Greenwood, Tom Hansen, James Ball, Gene Cole, Bell Helicopter and the USAF.

The UH-1N serial 96-6644 of the 20th SOS conducting open water training in June 1983. (USAF photo.)



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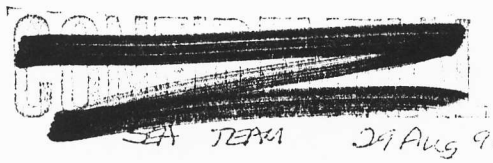
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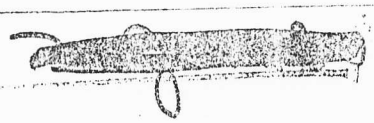
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